

BETTER FUTURES ADVANTAGED THINKING PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

REVISED 2024

Joe Howie with Libby Carr and Emma Cull



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty



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- Jorja Bentley (Community of Practice Coordinator)

The Framework draws on the Education First Youth Foyer Practice Framework, which was inspired by the work of Colin Falconer, who first developed Advantaged Thinking during his time as Director of Innovation and Strategy at the United Kingdom (UK) Foyer Federation.

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In the spirit of reconciliation, the Brotherhood of St Laurence acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which this Practice Framework was written, and their connections to land, sea and community.



ABBREVIATIONS, DEFINITIONS AND GLOSSARY OF TERMS

5 Offers	The planning and support presented to young people to achieve their goals in 5 key life areas – Education, Employment, Health and Wellbeing, Connections and Housing and Living Skills
ABCD	asset-based community development
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Development Coach	Better Futures Practitioners who work directly with young people
BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
Care services	Formerly Out-of-Home Care
Care team	Group of people who jointly care for a young person during their in care phase
Care team meetings	Gathering of relevant professionals who meet to discuss with the young person their day-to-day care in accordance with the overall case, transition and cultural plans
Case manager	Refers to Child Protection practitioners and contracted case managers
Community Connector	Better Futures Practitioners focused on building supportive networks, pathways and connections for young people in their communities
CoP	Community of Practice
CRIS	Client Relationship Information System
CRISSP	Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victorian Government)
First Nations	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
In care	Phase referring to Better Futures service when a young person is in care services and subject to a Child Protection statutory order
Independent living	Having choice and control of one's life and one's environment
Leaving care	Terminology previously used for services supporting young people to transition from care services
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
Post care	Phase referring to Better Futures service after a young person has transitioned from care services
Statutory order	A protection order made by the Children's Court of Victoria
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UK	United Kingdom
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Language statement

Although the terms 'Koorie' or 'Koori' are commonly used to describe the Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, in this Framework we use the term 'First Nations' for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Victoria. In so doing, we recognise the diversity of Victoria's First Nations peoples.

ABOUT THIS FRAMEWORK

The Victorian Government's Department of Families, Fairness and Housing has worked in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and partner organisations to develop Better Futures, a new practice model for working with young people transitioning from care services in Victoria.

To meet this responsibility, the Victorian Government has funded a range of Leaving Care* and post care services, all of which have historically experienced high demand and been difficult to navigate due to different referral and access points. As a result, many young people transitioning from care services were unable to establish or sustain independence.

Better Futures strengthens and streamlines support for these young people, with a particular focus on improving access to post care supports. In doing so, it ensures that more young people engage in meaningful activities that will support them in establishing livelihoods within the broader community. This Framework has been developed as a guide to support the workforce to deliver Better Futures.

The Better Futures practice model is based on the Advantaged Thinking approach, see Section 6, which was developed by Colin Falconer of the UK Foyer Federation and adapted by the BSL. At the heart of Advantaged Thinking lies an understanding of people's rights to develop a good life, one which they have reason to value, and a focus on developing strengths and assets rather than problems and needs. This approach recognises that people's capability to choose different pathways in life must be matched with actual opportunities and the resources to realise them. Advantaged Thinking is the fulfilment of this philosophy in practice. By using processes and planning resources designed to develop young people's aspirations, skills and capabilities it supports them to build the foundations for a sustainable livelihood.

Section 6 p. 28

Moving to an Advantaged Thinking approach

Go to

Better Futures uses this approach to equip young people with the appropriate supports, networks, skills, experience and vision they need to transition from Victoria's care services to independent living. It also provides them with assertive, flexible and tailored support to ensure their active involvement in setting goals for the future.

This Framework is intended to support the delivery of Better Futures alongside the DFFH Better Futures Practice Advice, which sets out policies, procedures and requirements for providers. The practices in this Framework are reviewed quarterly by the Better Futures State-wide Community of Practice (CoP), which commenced in April 2020.

DFFH Practice Advice available at <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>

Go to

*Leaving Care was the terminology previously used for services supporting young people to transition from care services.

USING THIS FRAMEWORK

This Framework has been developed to support practitioners, mentors, educators, employers and others working with young people who are dependent upon care services, including government and non-government agencies. It consists of 4 Parts, 12 Sections and 4 Appendices.

◀ **Part I: Better Futures and the Context for Change**

Section 1: Background and context
For Better Futures policy and reform

Section 2: Better Futures explained
A new practice model to support young people transitioning from care services

Section 3: Core components of the practice model
Service, practice and collaboration

◀ **Part II: Theoretical Overview**

Section 4: Young people as active agents of change
From surviving to thriving

Section 5: The context of transitioning to independence
Barriers and challenges

Section 6: Moving to an Advantaged Thinking approach
Rationale of the Better Futures practice model

◀ **Part III: Operational Elements of the Model**

Section 7: Operationalising the practice model
Staff roles, capabilities and activities

Section 8: Flexible support
Determining levels of support and funding

Section 9: Phases of care
Outlining the in care and post care phases

◀ **Part IV: The Better Futures Practitioner's Toolkit**

Section 10: Practice techniques for working with young people
By creating connections and opportunities

Section 11: How we invest in young people using coaching
Across key life domains

Section 12: How we involve young people
To support an Advantaged Thinking coaching approach

◀ **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Practice Principles of the 5 Practice Areas

Appendix 2: Overview of the My Voice planning resources


















Appendix 3: Examples of planning resources

Appendix 4: Trauma-Informed Practice

Appendix 5: Further Information about Home Stretch

Figure 1 sets out the operational elements of the Better Futures practice model. These terms and icons will be referred to throughout the Framework.

Figure 1: Operational elements of the Better Futures practice model

PHASES	OFFERS	PRACTICE AREAS	KEY PARTNERSHIPS
 In care	 Education	 People	 Business
 Post care	 Housing and Living Skills	 Place	 Government
	 Health and Wellbeing	 Opportunities	 Services
	 Employment	 The Deal	 Community
	 Connections	 The Campaign	 Philanthropy



PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

APPENDICES

PART I BETTER FUTURES AND THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE

Part I outlines the background and context for strengthening the transition from care. It details the Better Futures reform and provides an overview of the Advantaged Thinking approach to the practice model. It notes the ongoing development of the model for First Nations young people, and for young people with disability.

Section 1: Background and context

- Victorian policy and reform context
- Strengthening the transition from in care and post care services
- Further developments to the model

Section 2: Better Futures explained

- What is Better Futures?
- Better Futures practice approach
- What is Advantaged Thinking?

Section 3: Core components of the practice model

- Service
 - ▶ 2 Phases of Care
- Practice
 - ▶ 5 Practice Areas
 - ▶ 5 Offers
- Collaboration
 - ▶ 5 Key Partnerships
 - ▶ Community of Practice
 - ▶ Embedding lived experience



SECTION 1

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Victorian policy and reform context

Every year, more than 600 Victorian young people aged between 16 and 18 years of age transition from care services to independent living.¹ Young people exit from a variety of settings including foster, kinship, permanent and residential care. Transitioning from care services can be a challenging experience, with many reporting a sense of 'abandonment, anxiety and fear' as they prepare to leave.² Compared with those who are supported by their family and have strong personal networks, young people transitioning from care services can experience limited social, family and peer assistance on their journey to independence. Without consistent person-centred support, they are more likely to encounter difficulties in completing their education, maintaining or even accessing employment, and securing safe and ongoing housing.

Young people in this situation are also more vulnerable to the impacts of structural, social and economic barriers such as high unemployment and low availability of affordable and appropriate housing options.³ As a result, many experience a higher risk of mental and physical health issues, substance dependency, homelessness, and engagement with the criminal justice system.⁴

First Nations young people are significantly overrepresented in care services across the nation. To address this, in March 2021 the Victorian State Government commenced a \$11.6 million pilot in which it handed over control to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to provide tailored and culturally minded approaches that would prioritise self-determination and facilitate First Nations models of care.⁵ This is a positive shift forward in ensuring First Nations children are cared for appropriately and that they remain connected with their community, culture and Country.

Strengthening the transition from in care and post care services

Better Futures was rolled out across Victoria in early November 2019 as part of the development of a more consolidated, streamlined and easy-to-navigate system. It offers a new way of working with young people and their support networks, including case managers and care teams, throughout their transition from care services. Better Futures aims to engage early with young people, supporting them to have an active voice in their transition planning, and providing individualised supports across the five life domains of Education, Housing and Living Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Employment and Connections.

Home Stretch

The Home Stretch program is part of the Better Futures support model.⁷ It is based on international evidence that extending the age of support for young people in care contributes to improved life chances and outcomes. Home Stretch gives young people access to continued supports to secure and maintain stable accommodation as they exit care up to 21 years of age.

First introduced in some parts of Victoria in 2018, the Victorian Government committed funding in 2021 to expand Home Stretch, making it universally available to all eligible young people transitioning from foster, kinship, residential and permanent care.

Through Home Stretch, young people have the option of remaining with their kinship, foster and permanent carers up to the age of 21 years, supported by an allowance. Those leaving residential care (including lead tenant), kinship care, foster care, permanent care or in some cases leaving another care or living arrangement can access an allowance to support them with housing costs up to 21 years of age.

Further developments to the model

Empowering practice through self-determination for First Nations young people

Recent data reveal that First Nations children or young people are 10 times more likely than non-Indigenous young people to be placed in care,⁸ with one in six having experienced care services.⁹ Although these interventions are targeted at addressing young people's immediate safety, they can also have much broader implications for their social and cultural wellbeing.

On entering care services young people, particularly First Nations Australians, often have varied relationships with culture, history and Country. The way they express their relationship with these aspects of their lives may vary widely. Self-determination, however, is key to recognising the fundamental right of young people to choose, define and develop these relationships.

Self-determination means Aboriginal people and their communities make decisions, have a voice and lead on their own terms and use their own cultural values, models, paradigms and ways of working.¹⁰

The development of the Better Futures practice model has been informed by ongoing consultation with Victorian ACCOs¹¹ to give First Nations young people the opportunity to connect with culturally relevant experiences, individuals, communities and services across all areas of their life. In addition to an Advantaged Thinking approach, an additional level of specialisation is required to ensure the service is meeting First Nations young people 'where they are at' and that the service is culturally relevant.

Local ACCOs play an important role in delivering Better Futures by ensuring that First Nations young people have every opportunity to access culturally safe spaces and people, and receive culturally aware practice. The importance of this approach is well encapsulated by the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA):

Children can become invisible, their voice unheard, when our work is crises driven and our focus is on carers and parents... (o)ur practice needs to value their contribution to understanding their own experiences and determining the course of their own lives.

Aboriginal children are part of families and communities that have historically not had a voice and continue to be denied the right to self-determination... The experience Aboriginal children have with you – your ability to engage with them, build trust and act wisely on what they say – will directly impact on their self esteem, identity and capacity to develop a proud and loud Aboriginal voice.¹²

Better Futures Our Way: A Practice Guide for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations was designed in partnership by VACCA and the Victorian Aboriginal Children & Young People's Alliance. It provides background information about the Better Futures program as well as practice wisdom and guidance for practitioners and their managers about how the program can be delivered the Aboriginal way. It also describes the procedures, tools and templates that guide and resource the work of ACCO-based Better Futures Practitioners.

A series of [Better Futures Our Way](#) fact sheets, brochures and animations have been developed to support First Nations young people, carers and practitioners.

[Better Futures Our Way: A Practice Guide for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations](#)

Go to

Young people with disability

A Commissioner's review found that 36 per cent of young people in care services have one or more disabilities.¹³ Better Futures recognises that young people with disability not only require the same supports as others who have transitioned from care services, but may need additional support to navigate disability service systems.

The disability sector has a wide range of different support agencies and there can be some confusion around role responsibilities and which agencies are responsible for funding certain things. This can make navigating the system tricky at times.

The aim of Better Futures for young people with disability is to promote inclusivity by ensuring they have equal access to services and activities that support them to thrive.

The Better Futures Disability Practice Guide is designed to equip Better Futures Practitioners with the skills and knowledge to work in an Advantaged Thinking way with young people with disability, as well as to understand the resources, services and support available to young people with disability. It supports the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Better Futures Disability training.

[Better Futures Disability Practice Guide](#)

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PART I

PART II

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APPENDICES

SECTION 2

BETTER FUTURES EXPLAINED

What is Better Futures?

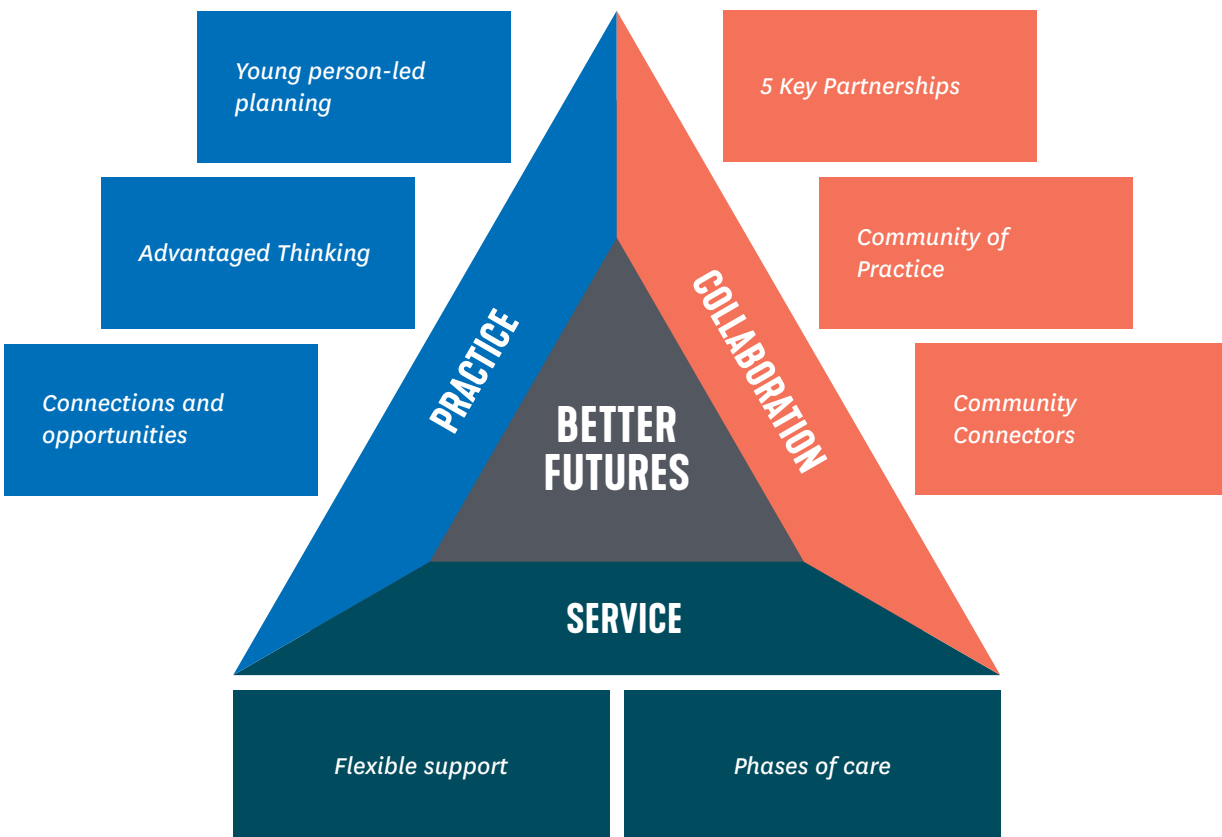
Developed by the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing in consultation with the sector, Better Futures is a new practice model guided by this Framework to support young people transitioning from care services. For young people to develop skills, networks and capabilities towards sustainable independence they need access to community assets, institutions, services and people within the community who value their individual qualities, experiences and preferences. They also need access to supportive professionals who can help them to see opportunities and work towards their aspirations. As such, this Framework looks at the various aspects of support needed as they relate to practice, collaboration and the service delivery outlined in Figure 2.

Vision

Better Futures will assist young people transitioning from care services:

- to become **independent yet connected** adults
- to **determine who they are and what they want to do** in the future
- to **establish a sustainable livelihood** (secure housing, income on which they can live, manage health and wellbeing, key living skills)
- to develop the **capacity to thrive**.

Figure 2: Better Futures service, practice and collaboration model



Improved outcomes

With the benefits of consistent and holistic support to connect to community and build stronger relationships and networks, young people accessing Better Futures can expect the following outcomes:

- improved family, cultural and social connections, and engagement with their community
- better access to, and uptake of, education and employment opportunities
- realistic and achievable housing options
- improved access to, and retention rates for, housing
- augmented independent living skills such as budgeting and living with others
- better mental, physical and emotional health
- enhanced connections to culture for First Nations young people
- to be seen as valued community members with no contact or reduced contact with the youth justice system
- to receive assistance from informed and responsive communities that continue to open doors to new opportunities
- a positive experience of Better Futures as a viable and sustainable future-focused program that retains quality staff and improves outcomes for young people.

Eligibility

In Victoria, the *Children Youth and Families Act 2005* (Section 16) establishes a responsibility for the Secretary to provide or arrange for the provision of services to assist in supporting a person under the age of 21 years to gain the capacity to make the transition to independent living where the Secretary has had parental responsibility for the person. Young people in foster care, kinship care, residential care are eligible for Better Futures if they are subject to a:

- family reunification order,
- a care by Secretary order, or
- a long-term care order

From 1 July 2021 young people subject to a permanent care order on or after the age of 15 years and 9 months are also eligible for Better Futures.

Young people on interim accommodation orders and family preservation orders at 15 years and 9 months are not eligible for Better Futures, however, should they transition to a statutory order in scope of Better Futures prior to turning 18 years of age they may be eligible to access the service.

Better Futures practice approach

Better Futures' difference to other statutory-based services is probably the feature of the model for many of us... and it's taken a lot of culture change. It is not designed to be statutory risk-focused. Better Futures takes a different role in the care team and tries to get out of the crisis-thinking. We're looking a lot beyond 18 years old when the statutory services are gone: we're looking at long-term outcomes and aspirations and I think that's really liberating if you do it well. The two key pieces of the model which we use well, that would differ to our statutory partners, are the coaching approach and the use of self-determination theory.

— Development Coach, Quantum

Advantaged Thinking

An Advantaged Thinking approach is about working with young people to develop and invest in their talents and aspirations, thereby enabling them to thrive, rather than focusing solely on their immediate needs. It promotes the creation of opportunities and works to break down any structural barriers that may be limiting those opportunities for young people. Advantaged Thinking is explained in more detail in Section 6.

Section 6 p. 28

Moving to an Advantaged Thinking approach

Go to

I'd summarise Better Futures as a facilitative model, not bureaucratic and parental.

— Manager, Whitelion

Holistic, self-directed planning across 5 Offers

Offering person-centred and directed planning and support across all aspects of young people's lives encourages a sense of agency in their decision making about the future. These are focused around 5 Offers – in Education, Housing and Living Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Employment and Connections (social, family, civic, cultural, religious).

Section 11 p. 66

How we invest in young people using coaching ▶ The 5 Offers

Go to

Better Futures focuses on really understanding the voice of the young person and their goals and aspirations.

— Manager, Quantum

Culturally informed

Building on a culturally informed approach that is delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations supports young people's self-determination and cultural development.

Section 5 p. 26

The context of transitioning to independence ▶ A culturally informed service

Go to

We've got to make sure that we are providing a culturally rich experience for the young people. It's not just... developing their independent living skills, we also are responsible for developing their cultural identities.

— Development Coach, Gunditjmarra

Streamlined service and flexible support

Simplifying and enhancing young people's access to services through an early referral to Better Futures when they reach 15 years and 9 months, and providing levels of support capable of flexing up and down to match each young person's circumstances, motivations and challenges.

Section 9 p. 48

Phases of Care

Go to

The framework encourages flexibility in approach, and the use of brokerage is a good example of this.

— Manager, Whitelion

Early engagement and 'stick-with' support

Early engagement with young people prior to their transition from care services enables Better Futures Practitioners to 'stick with' those young people on their journey to adulthood by offering coaching, guidance and support over a sustained period.

Section 8 p. 42

Flexible support ▶ Levels of support

Go to

It's all worth it when you see how they flourish and become these beautiful young adults.

— Development Coach, KYM

Harnessing community effort

Connecting with community members, and leveraging key partnerships across local communities, businesses, services, government and philanthropic organisations, provides young people with the opportunities, networks and resources they need to build sustainable livelihoods.

Section 7 p. 40

Operationalising the model ▶ Staffing ▶ Community Connectors

Go to

I'm like Google for the local area. You can come to me and I can connect you with something, tell you who does what, where and when.

— Community Connector, Uniting

Community of Practice for collaborative learning and continuous improvement

Bringing practitioners and partners together to review, improve and refine practice and implementation learnings, to identify systemic challenges and to enhance sectoral capacity for innovative service development and design ensures that knowledge is developed and shared.

Section 3 p. 17

Core components of the practice model ▶ Collaboration ▶ CoP

Go to

CoPs provide state-wide understanding and consistency of the role.

— Manager, NESAY

What is Advantaged Thinking?

While building the skills and talents of individuals is important, it is equally critical to invest in sourcing the opportunities, networks and resources that young people need if they are to use their skills and talents effectively. In the Better Futures practice model, we use the Advantaged Thinking practice approach to direct the way in which we work with young people.

Originally developed for the UK Foyer movement,¹⁴ Advantaged Thinking is not simply a strengths-based approach focusing solely on the individual. It combines individual with structural approaches to change, understanding that how we view and value young people in our wider society influences the way we work with them, which in turn influences their ability to access opportunities and resources. While disadvantaged or deficit thinking defines people by their problems, and subsequently builds services based on managing these problems, Advantaged Thinking takes a different focus. It instead acknowledges the challenges but focuses on each young person's innate skills and talents and then invests in these talents appropriately. It emphasises that young people have a vital contribution to make to the social and economic life of society, but can only succeed if they have access to the opportunities and networks that facilitate their participation.

According to Colin Falconer of the UK Foyer Federation:

... the narrative about young people was predominately negative. Too often, we knew more about what young people couldn't do than what they could. We talked about the need to help people cope, without always understanding or caring that people also need to thrive.¹⁵

An Advantaged Thinking approach, therefore, implies a shift both in how the government and the community sectors invest in young people, and how employers and the community perceive their capacity to contribute to this investment. Rather than primarily investing in young people's problems, i.e., focusing on crisis intervention and needs-based solutions, we should invest instead in building their abilities (for individual as well as social good). We also need to develop young people's assets and co-create solutions – real jobs, real education and real community connections – for them to achieve independent adulthood.

Fundamentally, the Advantaged Thinking approach challenges us to re-think:

- the way we view young people experiencing disadvantage
- the activities and approaches we use when working with them
- the way we develop those diverse groups which are, or will be engaged in, promoting and enabling young people to reach their potential
- how we speak about young people, and the use of positive rather than deficit language
- how we involve young people in developing their own solutions and improving the way we work with them.

Team Leader, Berry Street

[The Advantaged Thinking model] really sets a culture... [especially] for workers who've come into Better Futures from other programs, like from a statutory foundation that tends to have those risk-averse ways of working with young people. Viewing a particular way of working with young people or service delivery through a lens that is encouraging you to regularly focus on aspirations and ability and being creative, in turn fosters this sort of culture and [a] genuine ability to enjoy the work that you're doing more. Something I've really enjoyed as a Team Leader is witnessing the impact not just of Advantaged Thinking on young people, but on the professional development and morale of staff, which in turn [positively] affects young people.

One of the biggest highlights of working in an Advantaged Thinking way is that it allows young people to take some time. For example, they may not have wanted to engage over a period of time, or they may have tried a bunch of different things – you might have given a bunch of different advice and maybe it hasn't worked out for them. But then, all of a sudden, at maybe 20 years old, when something clicks and a young person decides to engage in the program. They say, 'Oh my goodness, I've had this moment where I've realised that all the things that you've been working with me around are starting to make sense.' And then they're really, really ready to give it a red-hot crack. For me, that's the biggest highlight... but I also think that's the beauty of the Advantaged Thinking model: it allows freedom.

Manager, Quantum

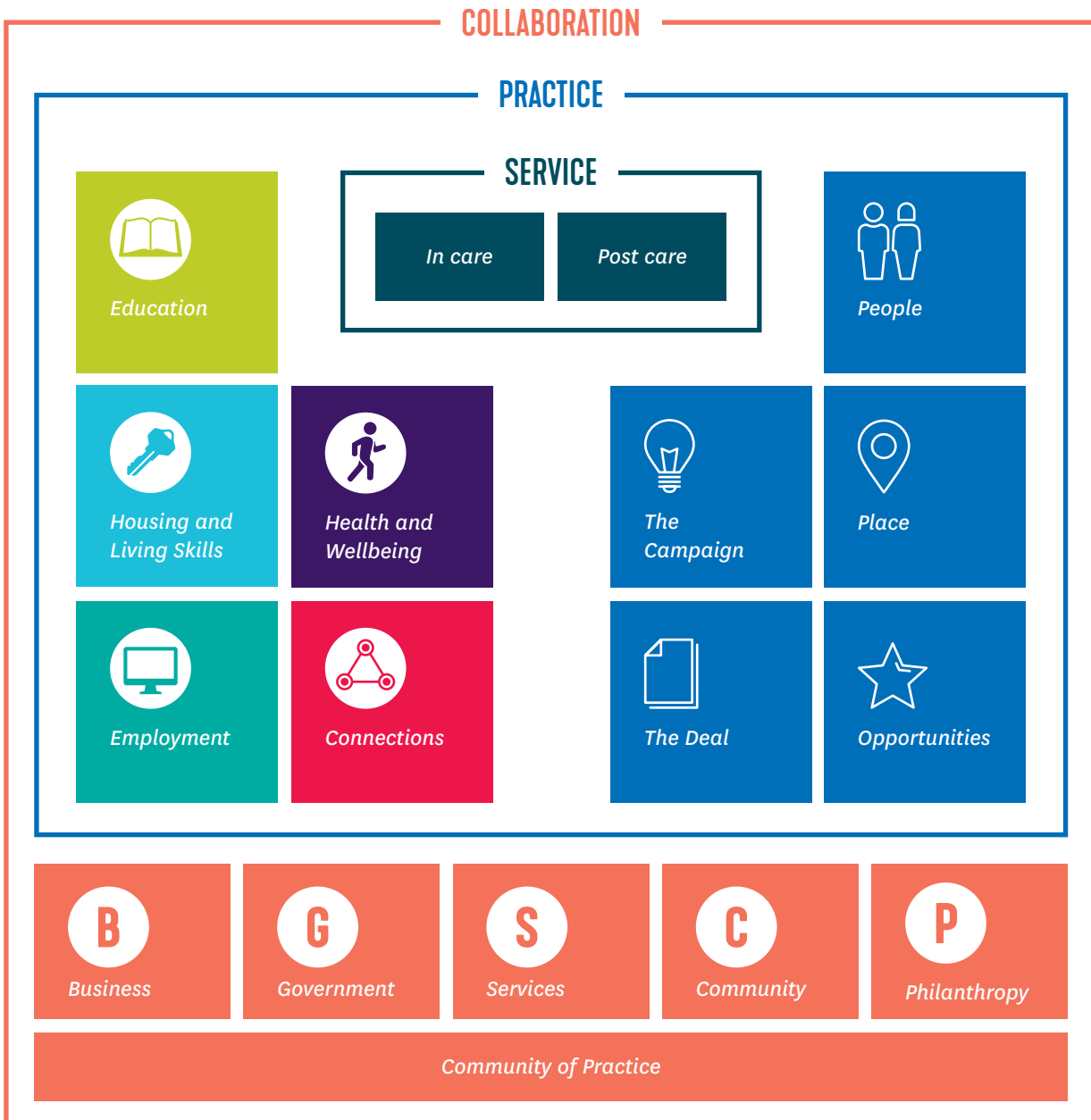
SECTION 3

CORE COMPONENTS OF THE PRACTICE MODEL

The Better Futures Practice Framework is comprised of three core components: Service, Practice and Collaboration. This Section provides an overview to each component and is a useful reference point to find further information within this Framework.

Advantaged Thinking is the DNA of the Better Futures practice model, a way of thinking that permeates all aspects of our work. The approach enables young people to achieve sustainable livelihoods by focusing on and harnessing their talents, skills and abilities. It calls for an investment in young people's capabilities rather than a focus on solving their problems. The Advantaged Thinking approach is embedded throughout all aspects of the three core components of the Better Futures practice model outlined in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Better Futures practice model



Service

Better Futures service delivery starts while young people are still in care, thereby providing an important early connection, but predominantly focuses on the pivotal transition throughout post care and towards independence.

2 Phases of Care

There are two broad phases to the Better Futures practice model – in care and post care.* Both phases contain critical activities that foster collaborative and inclusive practices to support young people transitioning from care services. Although Better Futures offers a consistent practice model to all eligible young people, the active role that Better Futures Practitioners provide may vary based on the circumstances and co-existing supports.

For guidance regarding eligibility and referral, see DFFH Practice Advice available at <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-eligibility-and-referral-practice-advice>

Go to

The phases provide a way for practitioners to locate practices, activities, planning resources, levels of support and partnerships across the life course of the service. Further information about the two phases, and the staff roles and activities within them, is available in Section 9. Figure 4 steps through the broad parameters of each phase.

Section 9 p. 48

Phases of Care

Go to

Figure 4: Better Futures 2 Phases of Care



*All Better Futures service relating to young people engaged with statutory orders falls within the in care phase. post care is used to describe the period after formal statutory orders have ended but encompasses young people who continue care arrangements beyond 18 years of age, including those accessing Home Stretch, or from foster, kinship, residential and permanent care arrangements.

Practice

The Better Futures practice model uses the Offers and Practice Areas as a way to structure and shape practice when working with young people.

5 Offers

Using a range of techniques, with coaching at the centre, Better Futures enables a solid platform from which young people can independently begin to exercise choice and navigate their own personal development towards connected independence.

In Better Futures, 5 Offers are presented to young people that will help inform their plans to reach their goals, and direct them to the supports, connections and resources they need on their journey. The Offers span the life domains of Education, Housing and Living Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Employment, and Connections.

Figure 3 p. 11

Better Futures practice model

Go to

To reach our goals and thrive in life, it is important to be achieving positive things in each of these five areas of our lives. Thus, the Offers hold an important role both in facilitating young people's successful transition to adulthood and in developing their capacity to achieve sustainable, connected independence. They support us to prioritise positive investment in young people by nurturing their abilities through opportunities.

Together, the 5 Offers create a holistic framework to engage in coaching conversations, transition planning, goal setting and accessing opportunities that will enable young people:

- to build their capacity to make positive decisions in their lives and to think and act on their own behalf
- to develop the talents, skills and qualifications needed to further personal goals and build foundations for a sustainable livelihood
- to accumulate contacts and access networks that build their social capital and social connection
- to develop the skills and capacities needed to thrive.

These Offers also hold a broader purpose beyond the individual. They bring together the capabilities approach to understanding what young people want to be and to do. Shown in Figure 5, the Better Futures practice model encourages movement away from an individual resourcing approach to one that collaborates in key partnerships with business, government, specialist services, community and philanthropic organisations. This can enable opportunities for systemic and structural change that is driven by young people and delivered through external networks and partnerships. In doing so, young people are supported to establish their own sustainable external networks of support and 'real-world' opportunities.

For further information about the rationale and evidence supporting each of these 5 Offers, and advice on using them and their associated planning resources, see Sections 11 and 12.

Section 11 p. 66

How we invest in young people using coaching ▶ The 5 Offers

Go to

Section 12 p. 72

How we involve young people ▶ My Voice planning resources

Go to

[Better Futures resources](#)

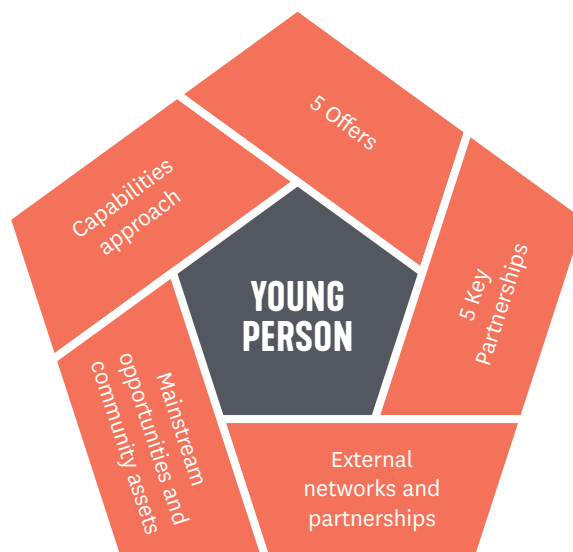
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Figure 5: Moving from an individual resourcing to a collaborative approach

INDIVIDUAL RESOURCING APPROACH



COLLABORATIVE APPROACH



5 Practice Areas

Better Futures uses the Advantaged Thinking approach as a new way of thinking about how to enable people, especially those experiencing disadvantage and social exclusion, to establish sustainable livelihoods. Advantaged Thinking asserts that rather than investing in young people's problems, the community needs to redirect investment towards building their abilities and harnessing them for personal as well as social good.

The practice model offers a framework in which to apply an Advantaged Thinking approach in an intentional way that moves beyond a welfare-centred mindset to redress the balance between meeting needs and nurturing the strengths and resources of people and communities. By taking a clear and consistent focus on available mainstream, cultural and community assets we can better understand, grow and promote the different skills, qualities, resources, opportunities and experiences that enable young people to access thriving livelihoods.

Advantaged Thinking operationalises this at a service level through 5 Practice Areas: Places, People, Opportunities, the Deal and the Campaign.

Figure 3 p. 11

Better Futures practice model

Go to

These areas provide a framework for practice across all areas of Better Futures service delivery, including working directly with young people on their goals and aspirations, the physical service environment, and the types of partnerships and opportunities that are brokered within the broader community. The purpose and qualities of the 5 Practice Areas, and the key principles that underpin each, are outlined in more detail in Section 11.

Section 11 p. 63

How we invest in young people using coaching ▶ *The 5 Practice Areas*

Go to

The Better Futures Practice Principles provide a self-assessment reflection on how the 5 Practice Areas can be evaluated to improve service delivery and integrate Advantaged Thinking practice. These are set out in detail in Appendix 1 along with checklists on the five principles.

Appendix 1 p. 76

Practice Principles of the 5 Practice Areas

Go to

Collaboration

Better Futures moves away from a mindset focused on trying to solve all the individual problems and challenges facing young people. It instead adopts a collaborative approach that helps young people to identify both their own goals and the assets within the community that can help them to achieve these goals and build sustainable livelihoods into the future. Furthermore, the Better Futures Community of Practice seeks to extend this collaboration across the sector by creating a structure and network in which practitioners can share knowledge and expertise to collaborate on solutions and ways to enhance service delivery across Victoria. The different areas across which Better Futures staff can engage for collaboration include: Business, Government, Services, Community, Philanthropy and the Better Futures Community of Practice.

Figure 3 p. 11

Better Futures practice model

Go to

5 Key Partnerships

Diverse, strong and effective community connections and partnerships are essential for the practice model to deliver on real-world opportunities through the 5 Offers to young people. This requires an agreement between the local Better Futures service provider and its mainstream partners – in Business, Government, Services, Community and Philanthropy – to collaborate in the development and shared delivery of services and outcomes. Partnerships should also span strategic, long-term relationships as well as those that are opportunistic or seek to address the specific requirements of individual young people.

Real-world opportunities are usually accessed through people's connection to family members or community – opportunities that are often denied to those reliant on care services. Harnessing community effort through these 5 Key Partnerships, see Figure 6, is a way for service providers to access a range of real-world opportunities for young people. It also provides a mechanism for valuing the expertise, knowledge and existing work of the community, and to build on, rather than duplicate, community assets. Key partnerships could, for example, be utilised to deliver coaching, mentoring, tutoring, work-related opportunities such as work experience, careers advice or job contacts, as well as access to social, community and cultural networks. This partnership work is integral to delivering on the service model and needs to happen across all providers, big and small.

A focus on place is a key building block for effective Community Connections service delivery. Place-based approaches provide local solutions for a community to generate and sustain positive outcomes by building on existing strengths and fostering peer supports, social capital, community resilience and social cohesion. Focusing on place involves connecting across local organisations, levels of government, different programs and service delivery types, and using local data, knowledge and expertise to ensure that actions are responsive to local needs or challenges and build on local strengths.

A place-based focus, across all service organisations, that harnesses community effort is a critical element of the practice model. This work can be enhanced by the locally specific role of the Better Futures Community Connectors (for more details see Section 7).

Section 7 p. 40

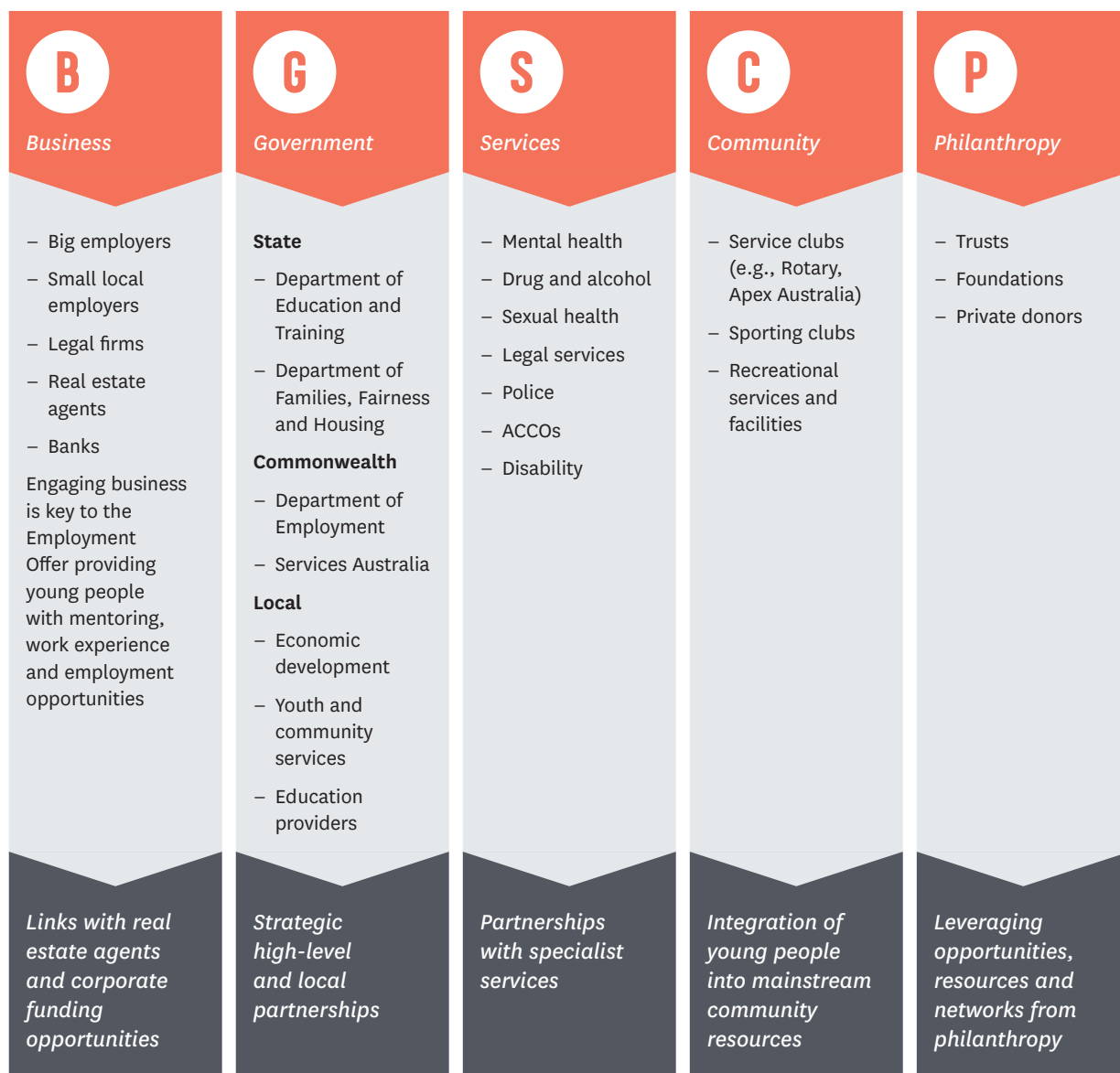
Operationalising the practice model ▶ *Staffing* ▶ *Community Connectors*

Go to

By working in this way Better Futures aims:

- to foster a sense of community ownership relating to issues confronting young people transitioning from care services
- to develop community agency and accountability in how these issues are addressed
- to promote a shift in the way the community values young people, from passive service recipients to valuable and contributing members of their community
- to build sustainable pathways by mobilising community resources and contributions that will provide young people with opportunities, networks and local support.

Figure 6: The 5 Key Partnerships



Community of Practice

Better Futures recognises that the sector holds a wealth of skills, knowledge and practical experience. By bringing together service providers, DFFH and other key stakeholders to share and reflect on real-time challenges and opportunities, the CoP offers a structure and network in which to enable collaborative problem solving and enhance the sector's capacity for both practice and policy innovation, development and design.

The CoP also aims to help build the capacity of providers to collaborate both with each other and with government, agencies, businesses and community groups to facilitate more effective outcomes for young people transitioning from care services.

Better Futures, being a state-wide program, is full of such a diversity of people, perspectives, and amazing resources. Having a Community of Practice provides a great platform for key stakeholders to work towards solutions for both individual and collective problems. Recently, we have had a few specific issues in certain areas of our program. In using Better Futures Community of Practice and state-wide Better Futures network we have always been able to find someone who's got different solutions for it. This has been hugely beneficial for our program and the young people within it.

— Development Coach, Meli

The CoP promotes this collaborative learning through:

- an exchange of practice-based expertise to share, refine and enhance practice
- sharing of situated or place-based knowledge and implementation learnings to build community-specific networks and resources
- establishing practice reflection and continuous improvement mechanisms
- identifying ways of working with and building partnerships across government, business and communities to improve our offer to young people
- providing opportunities for professional development
- embedding monitoring and evaluation processes in service delivery to inform practice and ongoing service improvement.

It also works to ensure that the integrity of the Advantaged Thinking approach is maintained and improved across sites, and that current and proposed practices and approaches are best placed to meet their intended objectives and outcomes.

The networking opportunity that the Community of Practice offers is absolutely essential. It's been helpful to share resources and I'm very grateful for that opportunity.

— Manager, Anglicare

CoPs keep the approach front of mind.

— Manager, Whitelion

Better Futures recognises that, as practitioners adopt the Advantaged Thinking approach in the context of their own service environments, practice techniques and methods will continue to evolve. To support the ongoing development of practitioners across Victoria, Better Futures offers annual training sessions and self-directed online training modules to support staff in continually sharing, developing and refining their own practice approach.

Embedding lived experience

Young people with lived experience of care are the experts in their own lives. Having personally experienced the care system, they have unique insights and first-hand knowledge of how the system's policies and practices work. They also understand what it is they need to build towards a thriving adulthood.

The Better Futures Community of Practice provides a platform for young people to discuss challenges and opportunities within the care system, leveraging the participation and expertise of lived-experience professionals to shape service and practice dialogues. This way of working integrates the perspectives and experiences of young people by incorporating lived experience into CoP events, Better Futures practice resources, and policy developments.

CREATE Foundation is the national consumer body representing the voices of children and young people with a care experience. CREATE is committed to advancing knowledge of the care system, and informing the community and governments about the views of care-experienced young people.

CREATE coordinates and facilitates the Transition from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group. This Group ensures that the voices and expertise of young people with lived experience inform the service design, implementation, and evaluation of the Better Futures and Home Stretch initiatives. Together, they have developed a series of Better Futures and Home Stretch fact sheets, brochures and animations to support young people, carers and practitioners.

Both BSL and the DFFH Transitions from Care team collaborate with the Youth Expert Advisory Group. This collective works to identify gaps in knowledge, policy and practice, and to co-design and develop resources that integrate lived experience and best practice with the Advantaged Thinking approach.

Youth involvement is prioritised across all levels of the Better Futures system including:

- at the state level and in local advisory groups
- in the co-delivery and design of sector-wide training and workforce development
- through the participation at all levels of governance, in continuous learning and feedback mechanisms, and in paid positions.

PART II **THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

Part II offers insight into the context of young people transitioning to adulthood and the supports they require to establish sustainable, nourishing lives. It also acknowledges the barriers and challenges facing young people during this transition, and outlines the theory and rationale underpinning the Better Futures Advantaged Thinking practice model.

Section 4: Young people as active agents of change

- Young people's paths to independence
- Where young people are at
- From surviving to thriving
- Readiness and flexible support

Section 5: The context of transitioning to independence

- 'Instant adulthood'
- Smooth and volatile housing pathways
- Stable connectedness
- A culturally informed service
- Reframing 'casework' and 'case management'

Section 6: Moving to an Advantaged Thinking approach

- Capabilities
- Asset-based approach
- Social capital



SECTION 4

YOUNG PEOPLE AS ACTIVE AGENTS OF CHANGE

Young people's paths to independence

Young people take diverse pathways into adulthood; they do not necessarily follow a linear or prescriptive trajectory that meets definitive milestones along the way. The Better Futures practice model recognises this and has been designed to meet young people 'where they are at', and support them to move towards sustaining a livelihood in which they are both thriving and connected. Whatever the starting point for young people or the path they take, the development of a positive and 'stable enough' sense of self, combined with an asset base of skills, resources and opportunities, is key to them making a successful transition to independent adulthood.¹⁶

The Better Futures practice model is designed to work with young people from 'where they are at', and enable them to develop this 'stable enough' sense of self so they:

- become independent yet connected adults
- can determine who they are and what they want to do in the future
- realise they are capable of establishing a sustainable livelihood – with secure housing, income on which they can live independently, managed health and wellbeing, and key living skills
- develop the capacity to flourish and thrive.

Where young people are at

To assist young people to navigate from a life of surviving towards one of thriving, Better Futures starts with where they are currently at. This approach is designed to enable them to identify who they are now, who they want to be in the future, and what they want to do, and need to do, to reach their goals.

Better Futures Practitioners then work with young people to nurture their capabilities:

- to overcome any limiting mindsets
- to build aspiration and achievement
- to grow existing strengths and nurture talents.

A focus on personal aspirations is confronting and liberating for young people and requires time, safety and relationship building.

— Manager, Berry Street

Through delivery of the 5 Offers, young people are able to identify and develop the capabilities that will enable them to thrive and to build an independent livelihood.

From surviving to thriving

You need to build a network around young people. We still need the care sector and organisations doing great work but we also need to help people prepare for the next chapter of their life. It is not a normal life to rely on the service system forever. You will end up with no community, no job, no life. No one tried to help me venture outside of the service system... [so] you get in the habit of calling up and asking for a worker. I was still doing that at 21.

— Emerson, post care, 24¹⁷

As already discussed, most service systems seeking to help young people experiencing disadvantage have traditionally operated from a deficit approach, focusing on risks and needs and creating systems that can specifically address these. This has often had the unintended consequence of further marginalising people by embedding them within systems separate from the mainstream.

Deficit-based language can appear entrenched across the sector and many practitioners use these terms as second nature. As such, they often become the standardised, go-to terms used to describe the people with whom we work. ‘High risk’, ‘complex’, ‘care leaver’ and ‘disadvantaged’ are labels from which young people do not deride a sense of pride. These terms fix a person’s experience to their identity, which subtly and unintentionally promotes assumptions that they are more likely to fail than to succeed. It also locates these traits, rather than the systems and structures surrounding the young person, as the cause of such failure.

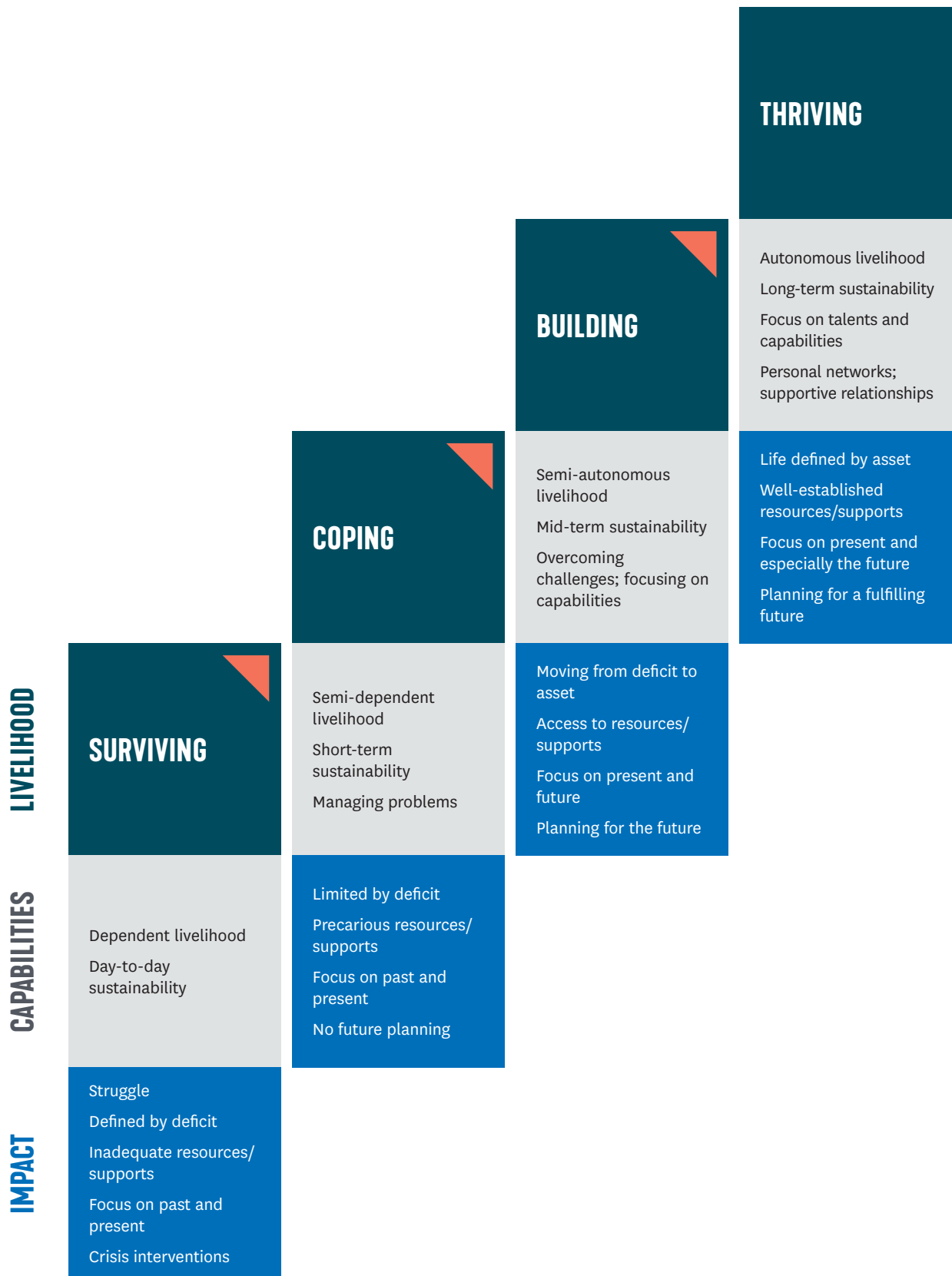
Better Futures challenges these ways of identifying people by their disadvantage. It recognises, of course, that disadvantage exists, but that it is an experience and not a defining character of the person. In contrast to the traditional problem-based approaches to community development models, Better Futures has adopted the Sustainable Livelihood Ladder approach. This offers an alternative way of understanding where people are at a point in time in relation to their capabilities, which are fluid and ever evolving, not fixed states or identities.

*[Advantaged Thinking] promotes talking about people in ways that respect their individual humanity and potential... [and are] based on their identity as people first, with any needs or challenges secondary to this.*¹⁸

For this reason, the Sustainable Livelihoods Ladder focuses not on framing people as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘in need’, but rather on recognising that people experiencing disadvantage are ‘active agents of change’ who make rational choices and decisions about their lives.¹⁹ At its centre, this approach aims to shift the narrative around poverty, and to create opportunities for people to be heard, to influence policy, and to be respected and included in decision making that affects their livelihoods. The Sustainable Livelihoods Ladder²⁰ provides a way of working with people experiencing disadvantage that focuses on identifying, developing and investing in their skills, capabilities and assets so that they can establish sustainable livelihoods.

The Better Futures practice model reflects four distinct levels from the Sustainable Livelihoods Ladder, shown in Figure 7, which symbolise a young person’s journey from surviving to thriving based on a combination of their motivations, challenges and circumstances. The process directs Better Futures service providers to harness meaningful resources and opportunities that support young people to thrive. The ladder can be used as a conceptual tool by Better Futures Practitioners as they support young people to reflect on their current livelihood and to consider the capabilities, resources and networks (personal and professional) they require for a *good life*. Furthermore, a sustainable livelihoods approach provides a way of thinking about resilience in the form of young people’s capacity to cope with, and recover from, stress or shock.²¹

Figure 7: From surviving to thriving



Readiness and flexible support

As they transition to adulthood and are exposed to different opportunities and challenges, young people will encounter times where they require more or less support. Better Futures is able to offer them flexible levels of support according to what they are ready for and interested in engaging with at any given time, rather than focusing only on addressing challenges or crises.

Better Futures Practitioners determine readiness through coaching young people to identify their interests and aspirations across a range of pathways. This process allows them to explore where they are at and to tune in to their aspirations, motivations *and* challenges. It also allows Better Futures Practitioners to tailor opportunities and activities that have the potential to open up new possibilities for young people, and can help them to develop and explore their aspirations for the future.

Section 10 p. 57

Practice techniques for working with young people ▶ Coaching

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Section 11 p. 63

How we invest in young people ▶ The 5 Practice Areas; The 5 Offers

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Challenges are addressed, not as a precondition of further engagement in Better Futures but rather as part of the pathway to achieving self-directed goals. Having agency over their pathway is critical to promoting young people's agency – to think and act on their own behalf – and also to moving closer to being ready for sustainable and connected independence.

Better Futures gives us capacity to normalise the experience of being a young person and to convey to young people that it's OK to make mistakes. When you're in a statutory circumstance, there's always very tight boundaries around what can and can't happen. Whereas when you are moving into the community it's OK to make errors – that's what young people do. It doesn't mean that everything is all over; we can continue to support you and help you make different, more informed choices.

— Manager, Berry Street

The Better Futures practice model also enables Better Futures Practitioners:

- to 'stick with' or journey with young people through to independent adulthood
- to coach, guide and support them over a sustained period
- to provide intensive support when young people need or are ready for it
- to offer, where more appropriate, light-touch support and access to services, opportunities or brokerage.

Young people engage when they're ready to engage, and they're ready to make change when they're ready to make change. And that's probably, for me, the biggest highlight, because we've watched so many people just float around. Sometimes, particularly between 18 and 20 years old, it's really hard going for them. They're learning a lot of hard life lessons and then something just clicks... So, for me, I think that's a really special thing and a big part of this program.

— Manager, Quantum

Better Futures overall made the transition into adulthood a lot easier. I would have been thrown into the deep end otherwise. I had one worker in the first few months, but got a new one after that who has been the same since. We are in contact once a week, normally five-minute calls to check up, talk about what I need. I am working towards getting into uni and have had extensive talks about all this with my worker, and about what support they could provide.

Sam, post care, 19²²

SECTION 5

THE CONTEXT OF TRANSITIONING TO INDEPENDENCE

The concepts in this Section seek to provide context around the commonalities, challenges and complexities that young people can experience, or need to navigate, as they transition to adulthood.

'Instant adulthood'

Today's transition to adulthood can involve multiple discrete but interlinked pathways weaving across education, housing and health. The transition may also involve 'backtracking' on one or more pathways, such as returning to the family home or disengaging temporarily from education. As young people navigate their journey to adulthood, many remain living in their familial homes or receive ongoing support from their families and networks well into their twenties.

By contrast, young people currently in care transition to adulthood on or before their eighteenth birthday. The result is often a 'compressed and accelerated' path to independent adulthood²³ in which these young people become responsible for achieving economic engagement, accessing and maintaining housing, forming and maintaining social relationships, and looking after themselves on their own.

One of my workers in kinship contacted [my Home Stretch agency] and from then on, I had a Better Futures worker. It was so good. I remember the day they came to my house and were explaining the program. My gran was so happy. She was shocked. She was like wow! Great that there is support like that. If I didn't have my grandma or my [Home Stretch] agency I would have been so, so fearful and scared, because it is so much responsibility, the feeling of having to grow up so much at that age. It is not a feeling that you necessarily want to have. Families that haven't been through care, they would still have that support but people from broken families, it is so hard because you are basically on your own.

— Hayley, post care, 19²⁴

The challenges experienced by young people transitioning from care services can be grouped into five outcome areas – personal, social, housing, economic and educational – all of which are critical for a successful transition to independent living. These five areas form the basis for holistic planning as outlined in Section 11). Although the journey to independence of each of these young people is unique, the literature²⁵ indicates three common experiences:

Section 11 p. 63

How we invest in young people ► The 5 Practice Areas; The 5 Offers

Go to

- 1 Young people transitioning from care services who have had a positive experience and developed resilience often transition later, via a gradual and planned approach.
- 2 Those who transition early and experience placement instability are more likely to experience problems or difficulties post care, including periods of homelessness and unemployment.
- 3 The young people who experience most disadvantage are those who have had early damaging family experiences that neither the care services nor later support were able to help them overcome. This group is even more likely to experience unemployment and homelessness and be socially isolated than the previous group.²⁶

These three experiences provide an insight into the diversity of the transition experience, and the challenges involved in attaining a state of readiness for independence.

Smooth and volatile housing pathways

Improving housing pathways and outcomes for young people transitioning from care services is a critical component of improving life outcomes. Johnson et al. explain the imperative for this as being ‘two-fold’: that stable housing not only positively affects other life outcomes, but that improving housing outcomes for young people bypasses some of the moral and policy challenges created when they become ‘wards of the state’.²⁷ As these young people experience limited family support, they are often positioned at a heightened risk of homelessness in the period directly after they leave care services.²⁸ For this reason, Better Futures is designed to provide ongoing support for young people up to the age of 21 years.

In researching the experiences of young people transitioning from care services nationwide, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute identified two distinctive housing pathways – smooth and volatile.²⁹ Smooth housing pathways include:

- fewer placements
- a feeling of safety during the in care phase
- experiencing the transition at an older age
- a personal involvement in planning the transition to post care.

Volatile housing pathways include:

- a higher number of in care placements
- experiencing physical or sexual abuse prior to or during the in care phase
- transitioning from care services at a younger age
- not having transition plans in place.

Although the two pathways are simplifications of the true diversity experienced by young people, common barriers and opportunities enable these generalised groupings. The study highlighted that while accessing and maintaining housing are critical components for a smooth transition, reliable and sustainable social relationships are equally important.³⁰

Clearly, positive experiences of care services directly correlate with positive outcomes for young people during and after they transition to adulthood. Thus, it is vital they have access to a full range of opportunities – such as stable social relationships and sustained engagement with education and or employment – to foster smooth pathways.

Stable connectedness

Young people’s relationships with those who value and support them are known to have a positive effect on their wellbeing. These relationships build self-esteem and motivate young people to engage not just with friends, family and colleagues but also with the broader community.³¹ Young people who have the support of, and are connected to, their family tend to have strong social networks of supportive adults, peers and community members. Those transitioning from care services are more likely to have limited social networks, and many experience fragmented family relationships.

The unconditional support, I think that has to be the biggest thing for me because no matter what, at the end of the day, my foster parents, my foster family has, always been there for me. And... even when, like, I’m going through the hardest parts of my life they’re still there to pick me up no matter how badly things ended between us or whatever. So just that unconditional support because... all you need is one person to support you the whole way through to do greater things in life.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

We’re here as advisers. We’re here as confidants that young people can come to – not just when things go right, but also when things go wrong – even if they haven’t taken our advice, they can always come back. And I think that model is something really, really special. It’s a safe place for young people and it’s a place to learn and grow, so it doesn’t matter if everything, to this point, hasn’t gone the way that it was supposed to.

— Manager, Quantum

Securing a long-term placement, or 75 per cent of time with one carer,³² and having a strong relationship with a key support worker both help to establish protective factors in the forming of other social and personal connections. As many young people transitioning from care services return to their family of origin post care, the positive impact of having stable placements and support in reconnecting with families of origin is also emphasised across the literature.³³ In many cases, family contact during the in care phase can positively influence the transition to adulthood, although in some cases this is not possible.

In the absence of family and support networks, young people require assistance in developing and maintaining their own connections and networks. Acknowledging that many experience social isolation and loneliness during their transition, Propp, Ortega and NewHeart emphasise the need to build their 'interdependence' as opposed to their 'independence'.³⁴

A culturally informed service

For First Nations youth, a strong sense of connection to family, community, Country and culture can be fundamental to supporting their safety and identity, and is positively correlated with smooth post care transitions. Mendes, Saunders and Baidawi found that young people from First Nations backgrounds also frequently occupy care-giving roles for their own children as well as for siblings and extended family, both as they prepare to leave the in care phase and in the post care phase.³⁵ Cultural connectedness, which supports resilience, identity development and social connectedness, is especially important when young people are facing the pressures of transitioning from care services and being a care-giver.

The importance of culturally informed care has been formally recognised through the establishment of the Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care directives.³⁶ Victoria's 2012 Care and Transition Planning for Leaving Care Practice Framework notes that plans for young people to leave care must:

[a]ttend to [the] cultural needs and connections of young Aboriginal people and 'final arrangements' should include 'ongoing connection with family, friends, cultural and community activities and family contact post care.'³⁷

This outlines why Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are best placed to work with First Nations young people's families, communities and other professionals in providing a culturally informed service based on self-determination principles for those transitioning from care services. They are also informed by a holistic approach to health:

Aboriginal health means not just the physical wellbeing of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as a human being thereby bringing about the total well-being of their Community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life.³⁸

This perspective differs from the implicit values of the broader social services system, which typically directs support at individual people or family units. It fails to take into account the broader sharing of resources and responsibilities in First Nations cultures, as well as the cultural obligations around visiting, caring for and farewelling family and community members, some of whom are located far away.³⁹

It is of paramount importance that mainstream services and providers recognise the primacy of this individualistic approach, and work to ensure that their own practice is inclusive and culturally safe. In so doing, they will not unintentionally limit the right of First Nations peoples to lead healthy, connected and meaningful lives (see Section 1 for more on culturally informed practice).

Section 1 p. 3

Background and context

▶ Further developments to the model

▶ Empowering practice through self-determination

Go to

[Better Futures Our Way: Practice Guide for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, Part 2](#)

Go to



Reframing 'casework' and 'case management'

Language used by services and practitioners can sometimes inadvertently depersonalise working relationships with the people accessing social services. Young people, for example, consistently report they do not wish to be referred to as 'a case', with 'casework' and 'case management' also typically referring to individually focused work within social services.

There is growing criticism of case management approaches, or more specifically how they are practised, particularly the way they tend to define, focus on and invest in people's problems rather than their potential. Their individualisation of 'clients' also makes them an inefficient way of dealing with structural challenges such as poverty and homelessness.⁴⁰ Providing coordination across a service system that does not provide adequate access to housing or entry-level employment, for example, does nothing to increase the number of services available or to reduce structural inequalities; it can instead serve to entrench welfare dependence.

We aim super low for these kids in care. We are so focused on deficits and plugging them [into things] that we forget about capacity building. We have this [focus on] 'We need to get them on Centrelink', but why do that before helping them to get work? And getting a housing referral to public housing. Why do that before the real work around where they want to live? The focus of our work is about getting the kids into lifelong welfare rather than lifelong employment. We just aim too low.

— Child Protection practitioner⁴¹

Better Futures Practitioners can work across these service systems while offering young people access to consistent and holistic support after they leave the in care phase. The Better Futures practice model provides Better Futures Practitioners with a range of resources and techniques – on coaching, aspiration mapping and youth-directed goal setting – and invests in opportunities tailored to young people's interests and goals rather than just focusing on their needs or problems. It also explicitly promotes practice approaches that are specifically focused on promoting structural change by garnering investment from the 5 Key Partnerships – Business, Government, Services, Community and Philanthropy – to create greater access to resources, networks and opportunities for young people.

SECTION 6

MOVING TO AN ADVANTAGED THINKING APPROACH

Advantaged Thinking represents a paradigm shift in the way we think about and respond to young people experiencing disadvantage. It is a shift away from deficit, disadvantaged or problem-saturated thinking towards Advantaged Thinking and acting. It is focused on identifying, developing and, most importantly, investing in the skills, capabilities and assets of young people so they can establish sustainable livelihoods beyond the service system.

As Colin Falconer from the UK Foyer Federation observed:

No athlete turns up to the Olympics and expects to win the marathon just because they've made sure they haven't broken their legs. It's as though we deny the opportunity for certain groups of young adults to live an existence beyond the deficits they pose. We invest more in controlling the problem, than we do in empowering the person. An investment in prevention is only half an investment if it is not matched by preparation for a positive life and the progression opportunities to achieve it.⁴²

A number of key ideas, theories and frameworks are driving this emerging paradigm shift, and have broadly informed the Better Futures practice model. These ideas also align with and underpin the BSL's adaptation of the UK Foyer Federation's Advantaged Thinking⁴³ to a range of youth transitions programs.⁴⁴ Some of the key ideas and frameworks across these programs include capabilities, inclusive growth and social capital.

These broad ideas, briefly outlined in this Section, provide the theoretical and practical underpinnings for the Better Futures practice model. Together they inspire a way of working with young people that recognises their:

- vital role in social and economic life
- individual capacity
- right to access opportunities and social networks that facilitate their social and economic participation
- rights, responsibilities and commitments to themselves and the wider community
- sense of belonging
- personal agency or capacity to make decisions on their own and other's behalf.

Many Better Futures staff have been trained in trauma-informed practice so they can recognise the signs of particular behaviour, habits and practices with reference to trauma, and to offer the young person involved emotionally safe ways of working to assist in their recovery. The Advantaged Thinking approach, coaching techniques and person-centred resources offer a clear way of working with young people that support the recovery goals connected to trauma-informed practice principles.

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Trauma-informed practice

Go to

Capabilities

Policy and programmatic sectors are increasingly looking to the capabilities approach as a way of providing more productive and effective responses to address complex social issues.⁴⁵ Developed almost 20 years ago by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, the approach identifies and ‘valorises’ people’s fundamental capabilities; put simply, it is an approach that focuses people’s freedom to make choices about what they can be, rather than on their limitations or problems.

My worker was very, very supportive. She kind of expected things of me that I’ve never really thought people would expect, and it made me wake up a little bit. It made me realise I can do things. And because I told her what I wanted to do, I got two job interviews to [become a] corporate receptionist and they gave me the job straight away! So I was happy. And ever since I got my job, my life’s been pretty much on track.

— Young person from kinship care, female, 19⁴⁶

Sen’s capabilities framework was based on the understanding that the freedom to achieve wellbeing is a moral right and is understood in terms of people’s opportunities for doing and being what they have reason to value. In Sen’s words, capabilities are ‘the substantive freedoms [a person] enjoys to lead the kind of life he or she has reason to value’.⁴⁷

The capabilities approach considers both an individual’s capacity to access and develop specific functionings (such as learning to ride a bicycle), while also taking into account the broader structures that enable them to access resources and opportunities (cycling, with access to a bicycle).⁴⁸



Nussbaum subsequently critiqued and modified Sen's approach, emphasising that people's actual capacity to express, show or realise these capabilities is affected by their life circumstances or context. For Nussbaum then, it is not good enough to focus on what people can be, on their potential. We must also focus on what people can do, on the quality of life that they are actually able to achieve: 'When comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice what is important is what each person is able to do, and to be'.⁴⁹

Nussbaum analyses this quality of life in terms of functionings or states of being, and capabilities – a set of valuable functionings to which a person has effective access. A person's capability represents the effective freedom of an individual to choose between different functioning combinations, the effective freedom to choose between different ways of living.

In relation to Better Futures, this approach highlights that without effective access to opportunities and resources, young people transitioning from care services are effectively denied the freedom to develop their capabilities for economic and social participation. Unlike their peers living in supportive and resourced home environments, many are denied the freedom to choose between different ways of living.

Implicit in the capabilities approach is the recognition that diverse collaborative effort across multiple sectors – not simply service providers and government – is critical. Thus, contributions, connections and opportunities derived from key partnerships with education providers, employers, health professionals and community are the key to quality training and education, 'real-world' experiences and specialised support.

Asset-based approach

There's a whole stigma around being from a care background and no one ever focuses on the positive things kids in care can do.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

Harnessing community investment follows the principles of the asset-based community development (ABCD) approach. At the centre of the ABCD approach is the premise that, despite mainstream narratives of deficit and deprivation, people experiencing disadvantage have existing capabilities, skills and assets, and their ability to drive the developmental processes of their communities is often unrealised or unrecognised. ABCD does not ignore structural challenges or individual circumstances; rather it values and supports people to address their challenges as active co-producers of solutions, rather than be defined by their needs alone. As an alternative to traditional needs-based development, ABCD offers a set of social asset-focused principles and practices that aim to mobilise and sustain economic development.

According to Mathie and Cunningham:⁵⁰

... the key to ABCD is the power of local associations to drive the community development process and to leverage additional support and entitlements. These associations are the vehicles through which all the community's assets can be identified and then connected to one another in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness.

Asset-based approaches are an integral part of community development in the sense that they are concerned with facilitating people and communities to come together to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills and lived experience of the issues they encounter in their lives.

In relation to working with people experiencing disadvantage, asset-based community development provides a series of principles and practices focused on recognising and harnessing social assets and social capital in local communities. These activities might involve including young people in decision-making processes, and on committees and steering groups.

Asset-based approaches are an integral part of community development in the sense that they are concerned with facilitating people and communities to come together to achieve positive change using their own knowledge, skills and lived experience of the issues they encounter in their lives.

Social capital

You're very isolated, particularly for me as I wasn't going to uni and going to work. Growing up you don't get signed to football teams because there's not a worker who can take you there every other day, or funding is really hard to get at such short notice. In my experience you're not really connected to the rest of the outside world. You just know your services.

— Young person from residential care, female, 20⁵¹

Colin Falconer defines social capital simply as the resources provided to an individual through the social networks they hold. He notes that: 'Social capital is widely perceived as a means to understand how we engage as citizens (Putnam 2000), how we secure economic gains (Sobel 2002), and how communities develop (Gittell & Vidal 1998).'⁵²

Three dimensions of social capital are commonly distinguished – bonding, bridging and linking. Bonding social capital involves trust and reciprocity in social networks within a community of people who are 'similar'; bridging social capital refers to networks that are established across diverse communities; and linking social capital refers to connections between individuals and institutions of authority. All three are important for the construction of a civil society and individual health and wellbeing: bonding social capital for social support and solidarity, and bridging and linking for providing resources, opportunities and links to institutions and systems that aid 'getting ahead'.⁵³

To build sustainable livelihoods young people experiencing disadvantage need access to, or the opportunities to develop, all three forms of social capital, which Better Futures provides. However, to build independent yet connected lives they also need to be recognised, and to recognise themselves, as part of the community with rights and responsibilities to themselves and to others – to see themselves as capable of acting and participating on their own and on other's behalf.

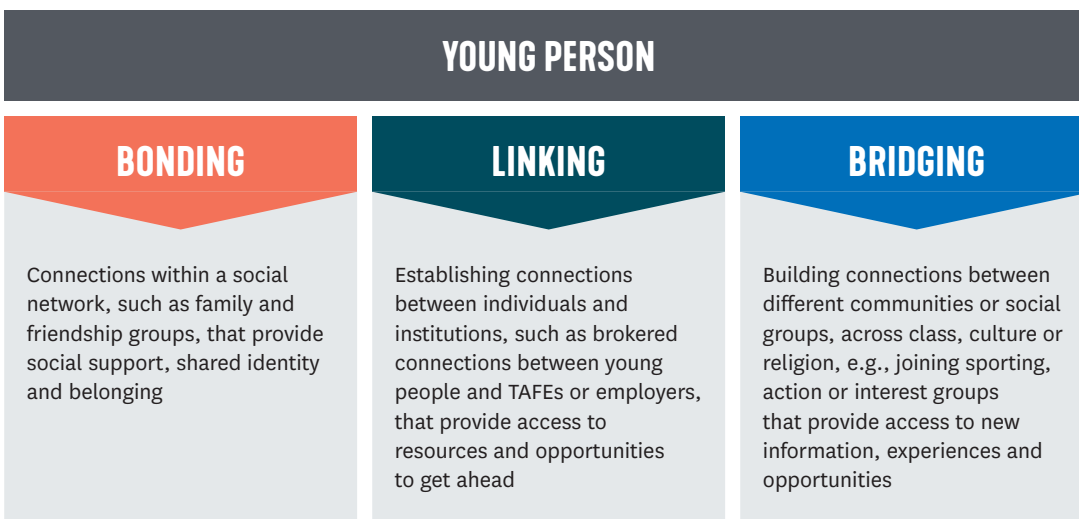
Better Futures Community Connectors play a significant role in the care team by building and seeking out partnerships and networks within and across local communities to leverage community investment and strengthen young people's social capital and community connectedness. Figure 8 illustrates the three forms of social capital that support young people in building sustainable livelihoods.

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Operationalising the practice model ▶ Staffing ▶ Community Connectors

Go to

Figure 8: The three forms of social capital needed for building sustainable livelihoods





PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

APPENDICES

PART III OPERATIONAL ELEMENTS OF THE MODEL

Part III steps out Better Futures staff roles, capabilities and activities. It explains the phases of care and how practitioners can use the flexible levels of support to work with, and prepare, young people from the in care to the end of the post care phase.

Section 7: Operationalising the practice model

- Staffing
 - ▶ Managers/Team Leaders
 - ▶ Development Coaches
 - ▶ Community Connectors

Section 8: Flexible support

- Levels of support
- Flexible funds

Section 9: Phases of Care

- In care
- Post care



SECTION 7

OPERATIONALISING THE PRACTICE MODEL

Staffing

The successful delivery of Better Futures is contingent on a mix of paid multidisciplinary staff and a volunteer team – with talents, skills, training and life experiences sourced from the community – providing a broad range of appropriate opportunities, networks and resources for young people. Importantly, they hold a strong belief in the abilities and capacity of young people to change their circumstances and build sustainable livelihoods.

With this key shift to a belief that young people are the experts of their own lives, we have moved from a case management to a development coaching approach; from ‘managing’ their ‘cases’ to working with them to identify their goals and aspirations and investing in pathways for them to achieve these. At the heart of this staffing model lies consistent, sustained support from Development Coaches that is based on the personal understanding and trust they have developed with young people. The Community Connector role supports the work of the Development Coaches and is critically important in connecting young people with their community by building supportive networks, pathways and connections and reintroducing them into mainstream opportunities.

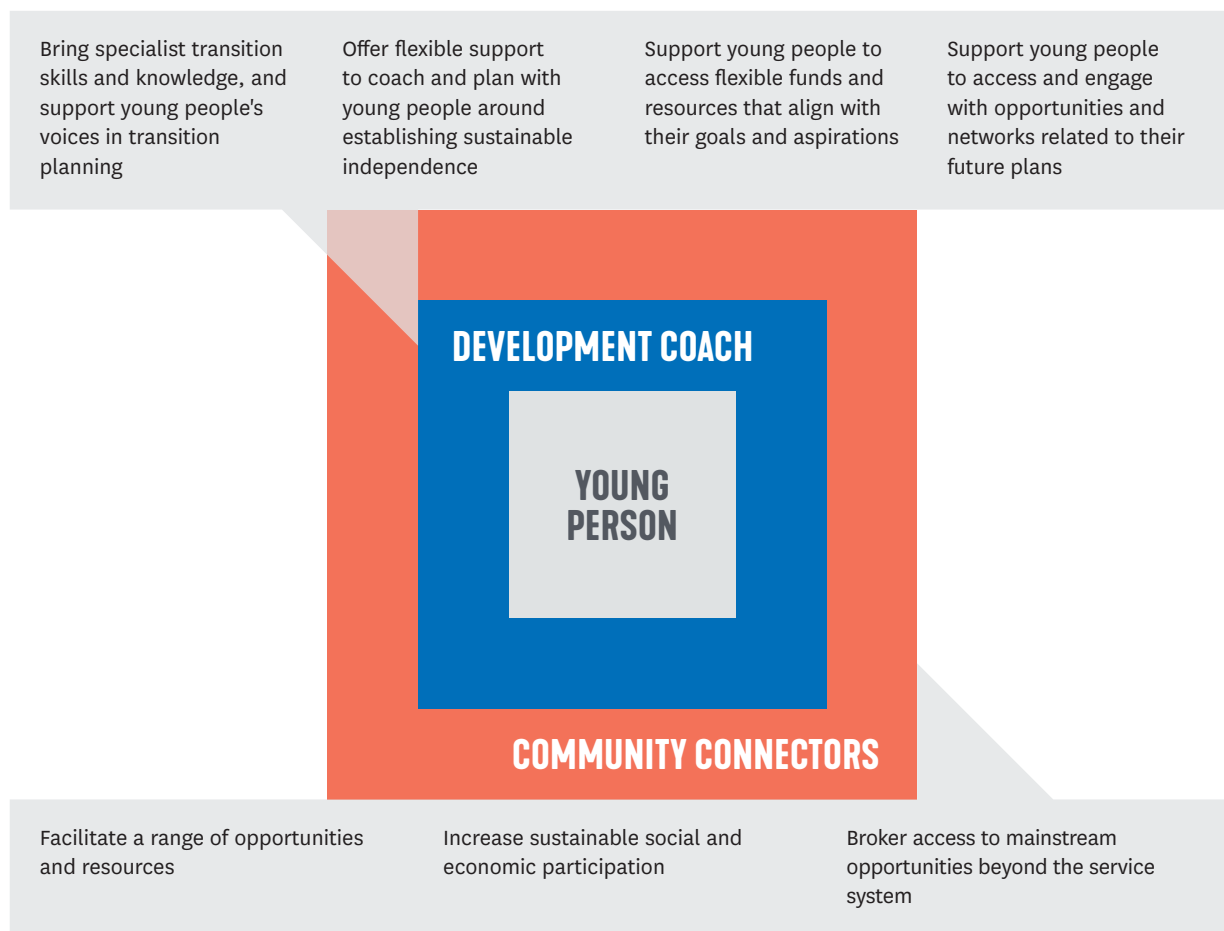
Section 5 p. 27

The context of transitioning to independence

▶ *Reframing ‘case work’ and ‘case management’*

Go to

Figure 9: Better Futures staffing model





Better Futures staff will have, or be able to draw upon, networks with the following professional capabilities.

- Leadership and influence – to inspire young people, other staff and external partners
- Coaching ability – to deliver on the Better Futures practice model's distinctive Advantaged Thinking approach, and to facilitate future-focused, aspirational and goal-oriented relationships with young people
- Service knowledge – to develop collaborative partnerships with other services, share knowledge and promote a young person-centred approach
- Education experience – to give young people the practical assistance they need to access language, literacy, numeracy support and to navigate appropriate pathways within the education sector
- Health and wellbeing expertise – to work with young people to set positive health and wellbeing goals, to navigate the specific needs of those with complex challenges and to facilitate referrals to relevant specialists
- Cultural safety skills – to create an environment of shared respect, meaning, knowledge and experience that is spiritually, socially and emotionally, and physically safe for people, especially those from groups that have traditionally experienced disadvantage, discrimination and exclusion
- Networking and entrepreneurial skills – to establish, facilitate and leverage community networks, opportunities and resources for young people
- Career development experience – to provide quality, knowledgeable vocational guidance and support that will enable young people to achieve their career goals

Here we step out the key roles, responsibilities and activities of Better Futures staff to demonstrate how each responds to and works across the core components of the practice model.

Managers/Team Leaders

This position is key to embedding the Advantaged Thinking approach through practice reflection. Team Leaders and Managers should demonstrate leadership in advocating for the recognition of young people's talents and their value to community. In so doing, they will create an enabling and authorising environment for their staff to continue to work towards an Advantaged Thinking approach.

A highlight for me has been observing how staff embrace the Advantaged Thinking model... and how this impacts their ability to enjoy their job.

— Team Leader, Berry Street

Service

Team Leaders and Managers show leadership by creating and sustaining a positive workplace culture and aspirational approach to working with young people through an Advantaged Thinking mindset.

During the in care phase, Team Leaders and Managers hold knowledge about, and key relationships and partnerships with, government and sectorial statutory services, as well as critical mainstream institutions. They also consider how they can best harness internal expertise and services from across their organisation to support this work.

To support the post care phase of the service, Team Leaders and Managers engage in relationships and partnerships with key networks and organisations that sit alongside some of the critical Offer areas, such as education and employment. They will be involved in network discussions around employment pipelines and the creation of educational opportunities for young people, and will develop ongoing relationships that support young people to transition successfully to adulthood. Team Leaders and Managers will also be part of higher level networks – such as with mainstream educational institutions, local councils and employer groups – that support young people

and reflect on their experiences of coming through the Better Futures program. In advocating for young people, they will work with local communities to find solutions that will support them into their chosen pathways in these critical areas.

I think staff do embrace the Advantaged Thinking practice approach, as we all see the outcomes that can be achieved and the evidence behind it. It really is a leadership role to try and keep the fidelity of the model and work through that because we know it works. But it can be really put under some stress when you've got high workloads and all those statutory bodies that are focusing on risk management and crisis-type work. We've just got to try for that long haul, more strategic thinking.

— Development Coach, Quantum

Practice

Managers and Team Leaders need to source appropriate training for staff, including in advocacy skills, which can be used in practice to advocate at a broader level for structural change. They will provide mentoring, coaching and leadership to staff, volunteers and young people to embed an Advantaged Thinking approach in the team's practice. They also oversee the development of planning resources to ensure they provide support and advocate for young people's voices to be at the forefront of future-focused planning.

We've been using the Advantaged Thinking framework since the pilot in 2017. It certainly took us out of the crisis-response type service to a far more level service in which we were able to implement the systems and tweak them as we journeyed through.

— Manager, Meli

Collaboration

Managers and Team Leaders need to inspire, be innovative and policy minded to advocate for systems change, and to build a team and lead it with an Advantaged Thinking approach. They will ensure culturally safe practices and connection to community by working collaboratively and facilitating engagement with their local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. They will also showcase and promote young people's skills and talents within their own organisations and within the broader community. Managers and Team leaders are encouraged to connect with the Better Futures Community of Practice to exchange practice expertise, share knowledge, pursue collaborative continuous learning, and engage in reflective feedback from ongoing research and evaluation.

The CoP is great for sharing ideas; we have used other organisations' approaches to reassess our own.

— Manager, Quantum

Managers and Team Leaders will build and maintain key partnerships that support the 5 Offers with relevant external services, community and business, including those with culturally, linguistically and spiritually diverse connections. They will continue to liaise, influence and collaborate with stakeholders in the community to work towards systems change.

We've set up a collaboration between us and Brophy. Those relationships mean we can give them a call and say, 'We've got this situation, how would you potentially manage that?' or 'What does your Active Hold look like?'

For us to provide a service that is the same, we need to be working the same. Regardless of whether a young person comes here or to Brophy, my expectation is that they will get the same service. Whether it's in relation to their cultural needs or just their general Better Futures experience. We both need to mirror the way that we work. That's why those Community of Practice sessions are so important. We're able to share our knowledge and develop better working relationships with other providers.

Development Coach, Gunditjmarra

Development Coaches

Recently, a young person I work with wrote to me saying that she truly appreciates my advice, as it's very hard coming from somewhere with no parents, no one to ask those sorts of life questions to. She said, 'You've been like a life coach to me' – that's what Better Futures is for her.

— Manager, Anglicare

The role of the Development Coach is new in the sector and, in partnership with flexible and sustained service delivery, has been adopted by Better Futures to offer young people relationship-based support from initial engagement to when they reach 21 years of age.

The benefits and positive outcomes of this approach include:

- an investment in young people's potential rather than focusing on, and defining them by, their past traumas and current challenges
- developing healthy relationships and mutual trust thereby allowing young people to be more motivated and future oriented
- providing support across a longer service timeframe,⁵⁴ from in care to post care, thereby improving outcomes for young people as they become independent
- holistic, tailored, person-centred planning and support, which enable Development Coaches to identify and address multiple underlying barriers.

Service

Levels of support vary from week to week. The aim is to get the young person to a level where they don't require that day-to-day support. You get them to [where they're achieving] their goals in education, employment, and have things set up where they only need to contact you for worst case scenarios. That's the end goal – how we get there is working towards those goals.

— Development Coach, Meli

In care service

The Development Coach role enables staff to engage directly with young people while they are still in care to inform them about the service, build rapport and assist with accessing opportunities in line with their goals and interests.

Key activities	Update and communicate with case managers prior to the closure of an order when young people are on Active Hold
	Increase participation in care team meetings and transitioning from care services discussions prior to an order ceasing
	Provide secondary consultation to the case manager or care team during the transition planning process
	Contact all young people upon closure of their order to inform them about the Better Futures model and discuss their level of engagement with the service offering (as determined by the young person)

Post care service

Once young people transition from the in care phase, the Development Coach's role will likely evolve into that of a central point of support. In this role, they will communicate with key stakeholders and young people about the Better Futures service offering, provide consistent and informed coordination, and streamlined navigation of relevant Commonwealth, state, and community resources and services.

Development Coaches will flex up and down across the levels of support and work with young people to identify who they are now, who they want to be in the future and what they want to do in life. This starts with recognising where young people are at and nurturing their capabilities through delivering the

5 Offers to remove any limiting mindsets, to build aspirations and achievement, and to grow existing strengths and nurture talents.

- Allow young people to determine their readiness to engage with the service and to take up different types of opportunities
- Hold quarterly check-ins for all young people on Active Hold in post care
- Work in collaboration with key supports and attend care team meetings where applicable
- Explore and highlight young people's capabilities, interests and talents, and involve them in developing, implementing and regularly reviewing plans, opportunities and resources accordingly
- Be curious about young people's skills, motivations and challenges and coach them to build aspiration, self-belief and purpose
- Work with young people to access opportunities across the 5 Offers, including brokering appropriate placements and assisting them to access flexible funding, support and guidance
- Support young people to access specialist services where relevant and build a network of contacts who can support them beyond the service system.
- Undertake activities with young people to build confidence and rapport, as well as life skills.

Practice

Development Coaches will work collaboratively with other professionals in supporting young people's plans to be sustainable and future focused.⁵⁵ Building this relationship with the young person gives Development Coaches the time, trust and knowledge needed to address more complex underlying barriers that may be blocking young people from progressing. It has proven to be foundational in building young people's capacity to transition to adulthood and in reducing their reliance on welfare and other services.⁵⁶

Development Coach practices include:

- working with case managers and care teams with a focus on establishing a holistic, culturally informed and person-centred approach to planning
- supporting case managers and care teams to embed a youth-participatory approach and include the youth voice in planning
- facilitating meeting environments that feel safe and friendly for young people to attend
- supporting young people to be involved in the conversation or to lead the meeting
- promoting conversation around young people's progress, potential and their capabilities
- align and support any work that relates to young people's transitional goals to adulthood
- working beyond the young person's needs to develop capability for a sustainable livelihood and the capacity to thrive.

Collaboration

Development Coaches are experts in youth engagement as well as specialists in local and broader systems, resources and opportunities supporting the transition to adulthood. While young people are in care, Development Coaches work collaboratively with case managers and other professionals using practices that both involve young people and sustain a sense of high belief in them. Development Coaches can add value to these discussions by bringing Advantaged Thinking to the table, by using the positive language of aspirations, goals, talents and opportunities, and by talking about in care support and supported independence.

Development Coaches can also look to harness relationships across the 5 Offers to assist young people in developing their social capital. Communication and collaboration with local Community Connectors is also critical in amplifying this area of the work.

For more detail about the role, responsibilities and activities of Developmental Coaches, see Section 9, and for practice techniques and advice see Part IV.

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Operational Elements of the Model ▶ Phases of Care

Go to

[Better Futures 5 Offer Practice Guides](#)

Go to

[Better Futures Disability Practice Guide](#)

Go to

[Better Futures Our Way: Practice Guide for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations](#)

Go to

Community Connectors

We organise catch ups and Better Futures events... We work on incorporating young people from when they're in Active Hold, to build those relationships so that then when they need our support, they already have a really good relationship with us. So when they hit 18 and everything else finishes, they have that existing support with us.

— Community Connector, Brophy

Better Futures has introduced an innovative role with Community Connectors, one that focuses on linking young people in with the community. They do this by seeking out and brokering partnerships, networks and resources within local communities to leverage community investment and strengthen young people's social capital and connectedness.

Although Development Coaches will continue to play a vital role in identifying and sourcing community opportunities, the Community Connector will focus more specifically on creating mentoring opportunities and harnessing, addressing and bridging some of the barriers and gaps to young people's participation. Resourcing locally based Community Connectors will also ensure that Better Futures builds on the assets and strengths of the local community while developing its own capacity to contribute to local solutions.

For March Mentor Month we went into schools and had kids on the radio talking about mentors... We got everyone in the community talking about care services, and now members of the community have contacted us to ask to come on as mentors.

— Community Connector, Uniting

The Community Connector role seeks:

- to facilitate a range of opportunities and resources
- to increase sustainable social and economic participation
- to broker access to mainstream opportunities beyond the service system.

Service

Community connections allows creative alternative options for young people.

— Manager, Berry Street

Community Connectors broker access to mainstream opportunities, networks and resources for young people transitioning from care services, so they can build enabling connections that will support their transition to adulthood. The activities of Community Connectors include direct engagement and capacity strengthening within the local community, such as:

- promoting investment in future-focused opportunities and resources linked to the 5 Offers, with the aim of developing skills, talents and capabilities that will enable participants to thrive
- bringing together key stakeholders within the community to create new opportunities and sustainable pathways for young people transitioning from care services
- investigating and undertaking 'real-time' mapping of existing services and opportunities available to young people and identifying any gaps in the local area
- sourcing opportunities to connect young people to community mentors who can help them explore their personal and professional aspirations and provide them with guidance, support and encouragement in line with their identified goals
- fostering a sense of community ownership around issues confronting young people with experience of care services, and developing community accountability to create practical, place-based solutions
- sharing and raising awareness about what young people and community are achieving together (i.e., capture local stories of community activity and share these with others to provide inspiration and demonstrate what is possible).

Practice

Community Connectors will consider each of the 5 Offers, including Connections, when brokering opportunities, networks and resources according to the needs and aspirations of each young person, their transition goals, and their existing connection both to culture and to the community in which they reside.

Community Connector practices include:

- Advantaged Thinking – developing and investing in young people’s skills, talents and capabilities and enabling them to thrive.
- promoting a shift in the way that community values these young people – from service recipients to assets within the local area
- taking a place-based approach – recognising that young people and their communities are interrelated and that the places in which young people live, learn, work and play have an important role in shaping their health and wellbeing
- culturally informed responses – building on the work delivered by ACCOs to support First Nations young people’s self-determination and cultural development across all areas of their life.

Collaboration

Collaboration that harnesses community effort across different services and community supports is key. It requires a shared approach so that young people accessing services can experience consistently safe, effective and responsive practice with a focus on positive relationships. Community Connectors achieve this through:

- sharing local expertise and knowledge with Development Coaches to assist matching a young person to opportunities
- developing new opportunities and leveraging existing local partnerships
- sharing learnings, resources and practice by contributing to the local Community of Practice, attending Better Futures local governance meetings and linking in with similar initiatives
- identifying service gaps and creating practical, place-based solutions for young people transitioning from care services.

Practice example

The Community Connector organised a housing forum for Better Futures providers in response to a key need identified among young people transitioning from care services. Due to lack of forward planning, these young people frequently face a crisis in their housing situation and have to resort to homelessness services. Given this situation, Development Coaches indicated that housing and living skills is an area in which they would like to increase their knowledge. Thus, the Connector partnered with two local housing providers, which have in turn secured the involvement of other housing organisations to increase the scope of the forum. This will provide Development Coaches with a range of contact points for housing support to facilitate earlier planning with young people around their housing needs.⁵⁷

Further information on the purpose, role and responsibilities of Community Connectors can be found in the DFFH Community Connections Practice Advice.

[Community Connections Practice Advice](#)

Go to

SECTION 8

FLEXIBLE SUPPORT

Levels of support

Better Futures offers flexible levels of support across both the in care and post care phases to accommodate changes in young people's circumstances, their readiness to engage with opportunities and their increasing or decreasing needs. The level of support offered is dependent upon the circumstances of the young person and the capacity of the provider to meet demand. These levels, which relate to the number of hours that service providers invest in supporting young people around their motivations and challenges, require regular monitoring and review. As a young person's circumstances change so too does the ability of the service provider to flex up or down to meet these changes. Support available through Better Futures is also provided in the context of the young person's current care status – either when the young person is still reliant on care services or when they have transitioned into the post care phase.

Better Futures encourages young people to have a voice in determining the level of support they require. This is initially enabled through coaching young people to identify their 'readiness' to take up different levels of opportunities based on their motivations and challenges. They are also encouraged to review their progress by engaging in the Where Am I Now plan, and to identify future opportunities and goals using Next Steps. These planning resources empower young people to inform any decisions regarding how much support they require. Service providers may draw on this information to manage their resources when reviewing 'case-loads' through operational functions such as supervision or team meetings.

Appendix 2 p. 82

Overview of the My Voice planning resources ▶ Where Am I Now

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Overview of the My Voice planning resources ▶ Next Steps

Go to

Support is categorised across the following three levels – Active Support, Limited Support and Active Hold.

Practice example of a young person flexing between levels of support

Anna lived with her grandmother in a kinship care placement that her case manager considered stable. Although Anna hoped eventually to move into independent living at a later stage, she was happy to remain with her grandmother after she left care. Anna met the eligibility criteria for Home Stretch and provided consent for her Home Stretch application to be processed. As Anna's plans post turning 18 were to remain in the care of her grandmother, she would then be in receipt of Home Stretch home based care. This provided a continuation of care allowance to Anna's grandmother for Anna to remain in the placement until she was 21. Funding was also secured to install a Kids Under Cover unit for Anna on her grandmother's property.

A year before Anna left care, Better Futures engaged with her and had regular contact through face-to-face meetings and phone calls. Anna was keen to develop her independent living skills, and Home Stretch supported her to manage her own appointments and money. She was also referred to a living skills program. Anna had ongoing issues with her mental health but was managing these with regular counselling. Better Futures helped her to access funding to cover the costs both of this and of her education fees. After Anna moved into the unit, Better Futures placed Anna on Active Hold, which involved contact on a quarterly basis. Anna was well engaged with the Better Futures worker and confident she could request support when she needed it.⁵⁸

Historically, in supporting young people in the leaving care space, we were more often providing opportunities for them in the crisis space. If we were providing Active Support to 40 young people at a time, we were probably working with 10 or 15 of them with the loudest voices. Often on the ground, this saw us responding to crises around their current situations.

In trying to move away from this now into more coaching conversations, we're talking with far more young people in a variety of different spaces. We are working with our team to try and make sure that key Development Coaches have more of an even spread in their contact with young people, and finding creative ways of engagement, particularly around listening and working with those whose voices are not as loud. At any time, you might still have some young people who have higher support needs for a while, so you are spending a lot more time with them. But you're still providing a variety of spaces for each individual young person at different times on their Better Futures journey.

— Development Coach, Meli

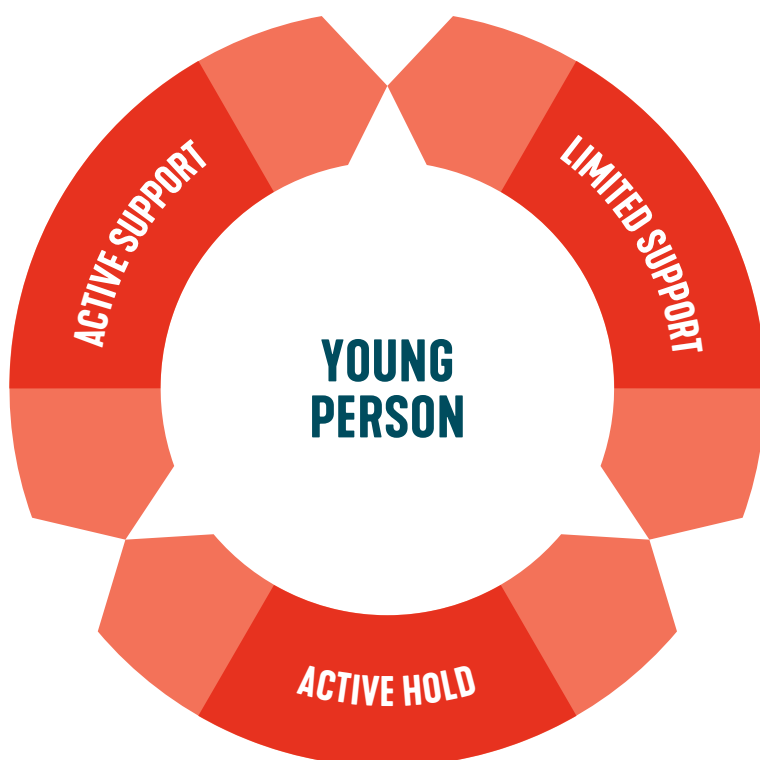
Active Support

Active Support is typically provided to young people who:

- are preparing to transition from care services in the six months before their order ceases
- have transitioned from care services and don't have other supports in place.

This includes sustained or more intensive support from the Development Coach to have future-focused coaching conversations with the young person across the 5 Offers, a process that encourages them to have an active voice in their goal setting. This can then be reflected in the My Voice planning resources, which bring the Advantaged Thinking approach to life and ensure the young person's voice is driving the work.

Figure 10: Flexible levels of support



I have a girl whose placement broke down and she needed to find housing. From this, I knew she was going to need Active Support and I'd be helping her with the Home Stretch funding to suggest stable housing.

We've just moved her into The Cocoon [safe housing for young women exiting out of home care], so now I know that she will likely sit in Limited Support for a week or two, while I help her set up her stuff in the apartment. Then I know that after that she's going to be fine, and she'll go straight to Active Hold.

They sort of pop up and then when they've reached their goals with you they disappear again. Down the line, if they need something again, you'll probably just get a text from them.

— Development Coach, KYM

Providing Active Support can include supporting the young person:

- to re-engage with education, employment and training
- to access flexible funding
- to develop networks, relationships and community connections outside the service system
- to access referrals to early intervention support if they are caring for children
- to attend appointments and meetings, including with specialist services
- to access cultural connections and return to Country for First Nations youth
- to develop life skills such as financial literacy, cooking and other skills required to sustain successful independence
- to secure sustainable housing (while the young person is in care this is the role of the case manager and care team)
- through assertive outreach for those who may be difficult to contact
- living in rural communities to engage with other young people
- to access medical, dental, sexual and mental health services
- to access trauma-informed services including counselling.

Limited Support

Limited Support is likely to be provided to young people who have transitioned from care services and have formal or informal support in place, but still require access to flexible funding, information, referral and advice or assistance to address short-term needs or to meet their goals. In some circumstances, a young person may require limited support from Better Futures while still in care.

Providing Limited Support can include:

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

Active Hold

Active Hold is typically provided to young people who:

- are supported by a case manager until six months prior to their order ceasing
- have left care and are achieving their transition goals
- have chosen not to engage with the Better Futures service.

Active Hold is a function that is also used when the Better Futures provider, due to demand, does not have the capacity to offer more intensive support. When this happens, the Development Coach will provide clear communication to the case manager (where applicable) and to the young person about the level of support they can offer. In circumstances where the young person has left care, and the Better Futures provider does not have capacity to deliver more support, the Development Coach will discuss with them the level of contact and support available and encourage them to make contact if their circumstances change.

Our senior Community Connector is working on a youth advisory group and panel for young people who we've got on Active Hold and Active Support. We're also developing a monthly newsletter for those people on Active Hold to see what supports are available if needed.

—Development Coach, Meli

The following points can guide Development Coaches' decision making around offering Active Hold support to a young person who:

- has adequate formal and informal in care supports and transition options
- has left care and is doing well, achieving their transition goals and only requires a regular check-in
- is actively choosing not to engage with the Better Futures service.



Flexible funds

Brokerage is really about getting to know young people and that can happen really fast... when the conversation is framed the right way round, like: 'What is it that you want to do? What are your goals and aspirations? Where are you at right now? Maybe there's one little thing that we can do right now and then we'll work on the bigger things as we go along.' And I feel that really builds that rapport and it uses the flexible funding in a way that is meaningful to the person receiving it.

— Manager, Quantum

The Better Futures practice model includes access to flexible funding that both attends to young people's immediate challenges and enables them to develop their capabilities. There are two ways to invest in people:

- by resourcing basic needs aimed at supporting young people to survive or cope with their circumstances
- by investing in capabilities and opportunities linked to the 5 Offers that enable young people to thrive.

Flexible funding supports the explorations of aspirations. If we are exploring aspirations and creative options, it would be more difficult to provide options if there was no funding.

— Manager, Berry Street

Access to flexible funding ensures that Better Futures practice adheres to the principles of Advantaged Thinking. It also ensures that investments are made in young people with the aim of brokering opportunities, networks and resources that are likely both to develop their capabilities and to deliver sustainable outcomes.

Access to flexible funding ensures that investments are made in young people with the aim of brokering opportunities, networks and resources that are likely both to develop their capabilities and to deliver sustainable outcomes.

In care

When young people are reliant on care services, Child Protection client expenses cover basic needs such as clothing, toiletries, and medical and dental costs until a young person's order expires. Better Futures flexible funding, however, may assist with building community connections and supporting personal and vocational development in line with young people's goals for independence.

Flexible funding depends on the young person. The smallest thing can be of greatest value, but then the most expensive thing can be of zero value to the young person. It depends what goals you're working with, and it's merited case by case. It's about how you're actually wrapping supports around them to really get the best outcomes for the young person, I guess..

— Community Connector, MOIRA

Post care

When young people are no longer connected to care services, Better Futures funding may also extend to basic needs that were previously the responsibility of Child Protection. Further details for application processes are provided in the Better Futures Flexible Funding Practice Advice.

Better Futures Flexible Funding Practice Advice available at <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-flexible-funding-practice-advice>

Go to

I think the benefit of the funding is introducing young people to the concept of what's a reasonable amount of money to utilise. I think when young people are in care, the funding comes through their worker and the young people don't actually understand how the process works. Whereas with the flexible funding, it's actually a bigger conversation. It's about supporting young people to understand what is a reasonable request, around learning how to manage your money and looking at how to negotiate the best price with retailers. So it's more an opportunity to broaden and familiarise young people with living in the community and how you manage money in that way.

— Manager, Berry Street

Better Futures flexible funding can be a really good opportunity to help young people learn about managing money. Say you're splitting up the overall total with the young person on three different things. You could say, 'Oh, so you want, for example, a bond and security deposit, and you also want to pay for school fees. This is how much needs to go on that, this is how much is going on this, this is what's left over.' So you learn how to space or spread the money. It could also even open the conversation about a savings account like, 'So we've got this much money left over: would you like to put it in a savings account and that could go towards a new car or something that you want?'

— Member of Youth Expert Advisory Group of Transitions from Care

Planning resources such as My Vision, Connections or Next Steps may help young people to identify both the opportunities and the resources they need to help them achieve their goals. The Something-for-Something proposal also supports them to apply for more flexible use of funds by asking for an investment back from them. This may be in the form of a mutual contribution or by offering something that draws on their unique talents and skills to benefit others.

Section 12 p. 72

How we involve young people ▶ My Voice planning resources

Go to

Appendix 2 p. 81

Overview of the My Voice planning resources ▶ My Vision, Connections, Next Steps

Go to

SECTION 9

PHASES OF CARE

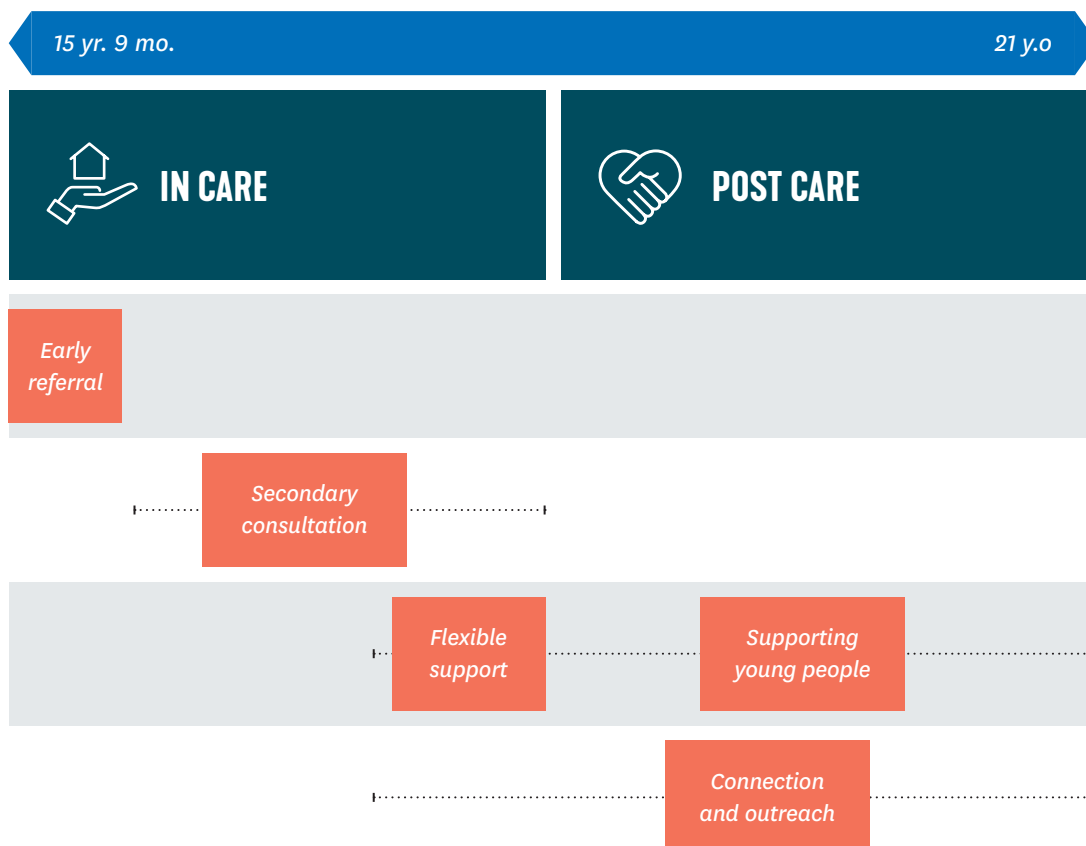
This Section outlines the operational elements of the Better Futures practice model, which are separated into two phases:

- In care – designed to support young people who are still under a statutory order
- Post care – designed to support, coach and guide young people after the end of their order.

Here we step out the purpose of each phase and the key activities and planning resources available to guide practice. By working collaboratively throughout the in care phase and providing active engagement post care, both phases have critical activities that foster collaboration and inclusive practice in supporting young people in their transition to adulthood. More details on planning resources that can be used in post care can be found in Section 12 and Appendix 2. Figure 11 illustrates the activities undertaken by the supporting Better Futures Practitioner as the young person transitions from in care towards post care.

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Appendix 2 p. 80	<i>Overview of the My Voice planning resources</i>	Go to

Figure 11: Phases of service



In care

The in care phase refers to those young people who are still on a statutory order. During this phase, they will be supported by case managers, who will drive all their activities as well as their automatic referral to Better Futures.

For more information on case planning for young people aged 15+, refer to Document ID number 1114, version 2, March 2016 in the Child Protection Manual available at <https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/>

Go to

Better Futures Practitioners are not responsible for transition planning, although they can support case managers, care teams, carers and other workers by offering specialist knowledge about systems and community to help young people navigate the opportunities available to them.

Better Futures Practitioners typically play an auxiliary role in planning with young people while they are still in care. However, their direct engagement with them will typically increase approximately six months prior to their order ceasing, unless special considerations apply (see Flexible Support). This could involve supporting a young person to have an active voice in their transition planning, and introducing the My Voice planning resources to help them identify goals and opportunities for independence. It is also important to ensure that young people have up-to-date and relevant information about Better Futures and how to access support when required.

The in care phase is comprised of two key elements, Early Referral and Early Engagement.

Early Referral

This is the early identification by case managers of all potential young people currently in care, and those who are nearing eligibility for Better Futures. Where young people have specifically instructed Better Futures staff not to contact them, service providers will need to consider the best response. The following procedures are employed in the Early Referral process.

Key activities	Notes
The case manager determines a young person is eligible for a referral to Better Futures at 15 years and 9 months	Depending on Better Futures local area implementation arrangements referrals are accepted on CRISSP
The case manager should discuss a Better Futures referral with the young person so they are engaged with the process and provide their verbal consent. However, where consent cannot be obtained for practical reasons, referral to Better Futures should still proceed	Better Futures nominated provider or sole provider in receipt of a referral/s undertakes an initial screening to determine the next appropriate response by the Better Futures service
The case manager generates a Referral for Service on the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) to the relevant Better Futures provider who accepts the referral on the Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP)	Better Futures provider initiates contact with the referrer within five working days to advise of Better Futures allocation and prioritisation processes
First Nations young people are referred to the relevant Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation delivering Better Futures either by the case manager or the ACCO case manager	Young people identifying as First Nations Australians are referred, as a first option, to an appropriate ACCO delivering Better Futures

Early Engagement

While young people are in care, all Better Futures activity comes under Early Engagement. This includes:

- secondary consultation and capacity building with case managers, carers and care teams
- flexible levels of support for young people six months before they transition from care services and, in limited circumstances, for other young people still in care.

Secondary consultation and capacity building

The primary function of Better Futures Practitioners is working with case managers, other practitioners and carers while young people are still in care to support them to have a say in their transitional planning, and to promote a focus on future planning that includes young people's interests, goals and aspirations.

Key activities

Provide information on Better Futures and how to access support when required

Share techniques and strategies to improve young people's participation and voice in their transition planning and care team meetings

Support case managers and care teams to promote conversation and planning around young people's interests, talents, skills and capabilities

Share knowledge and information relating to opportunities for young people to connect to the community

Notes

During secondary consultation, Better Futures Practitioners should not be involved in dialogue, planning or activities that focus on crisis or care-specific needs unless it can be linked with a young person's interests, goals and aspirations

Better Futures Practitioners are specialists in youth participation techniques and strategies and can provide advice accordingly

Better Futures Practitioners are equipped with information, networks, resources and local opportunities for young people across the 5 Offers. These Offers align with the 7 Looking After Children domains (see below) as outlined in Figure 12, and can be used to inform care and transition planning

Looking After Children is an outcomes-focused approach for collaboratively providing good care for children placed in care. In Victoria, this approach provides the practice framework for considering how each child's needs will be met while that child is with care services.

Figure 12: Better Futures alignment with the Looking After Children domains

Looking After Children domains	Better Futures service offer
Health	Health and Wellbeing Offer
Emotional and Behavioural Development	
Education	Education Offer
Social Presentation	Employment Offer
Family and Social Relationships	Connections Offer
Identity	
Self-care skills	Housing and Living Skills Offer

Flexible support for young people during in care phase

While young people are in care, Better Futures Development Coaches should primarily seek to establish rapport, promote the service and explore opportunities with them during the six months before their order ends (from 17.5 years old). In most instances, these young people will receive Active Hold support, with their Better Futures Development Coach making contact with them on a quarterly basis to check on how their preparation for transition is going.

As young people approach their transition from the in care phase (approximately six months prior to cessation of their order), their circumstances are reviewed and the level of support from Better Futures may increase. Young people may receive Active or Limited Support at this time to help them participate more fully in their future planning and to assist them to develop networks, relationships and community connections outside the care system.

Some young people may receive Active Support from Better Futures Development Coaches while still in care. This is likely to occur when they require additional support to re-engage with education, training or employment, or to support community connections where assessment shows them to be at risk of social isolation upon leaving care. ACCOs delivering Better Futures may choose to engage earlier than from 17.5 years with those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to support their connection to culture and community.

Key activities	Notes
Provide information about Better Futures and support access by the young person	Early engagement is initiated as young people prepare to transition from care services, typically six months prior to the end of their order. Direct engagement with young people is possible earlier in line with the Better Futures practice advice
Engage with them in relation to their interests and talents	This is a good time to introduce young people to practices central to the Better Futures practice model, such as coaching and vision mapping and Better Futures planning resources
Facilitate goal planning and access to related opportunities and resources	
Support them to participate in care-based planning and care teams	It is recommended to engage young people with the Initial Readiness form but Development Coaches may choose to employ any of the Better Futures planning resources

By the end of the in care phase, young people engaged with Better Futures will

- Have played an active role in developing a plan for their future
- Have a clear understanding of the processes and available supports leading up to their transition from statutory services
- Have received information on the services available through Better Futures at the end of their order
- Be offered opportunities to engage with a Better Futures Practitioner and access opportunities relating to their goals

Post care

Development Coaches provide young people with a continuum of support as they transition from the in care phase, based on the foundational work established through secondary consultation and early engagement while in care. Development Coaches are able to 'flex up' and offer a key role in supporting, coaching and guiding young people at the end of their order (see the practice techniques listed in Section 10). Young people on Active Hold are contacted for a check-in prior to transitioning from care services. Those opting to engage with Better Futures will be offered flexible levels of support that are customised to their individual motivations, challenges and circumstances.

The post care phase is comprised of two elements:

- supporting young people – by providing them with either Active or Limited Support
- connection and outreach – aimed at those on Active Hold.

Supporting young people

For many young people transitioning from care services, the process of establishing and sustaining independence requires a period of intensified activity and support. In the post care phase, Better Futures Development Coaches can provide young people with guidance and support to co-develop plans and access further opportunities and networks with a view to establishing a sustainable livelihood beyond the service systems. This could include providing Active Support – to secure sustainable housing, to build education training or work skills or to facilitate access to specialist health services – or Limited Support in the form of information, advice or referrals to maintain or stabilise housing.

Key activities	Planning resources
Engage in an Initial Readiness conversation to allow the young person to express how they understand their motivations and challenges across a range of life domains	Initial Readiness form Initial Fit assessment
Support young people to develop a Vision plan for their future	Vision plan
Co-develop plans and activities relating to opportunities or resources as well as arising needs	The Deal Where Am I Now plan
Support young people to engage with new opportunities, networks or social connections	Connections plan
Facilitate regular opportunities to reflect on activities and review goals and pathways	Other complementary planning resources as outlined in My Voice

Notes

Young people may move in and out of different levels of support within Better Futures until their 21st birthday.

The Initial Readiness form and Initial Fit assessment help to identify young people's readiness to engage with opportunities as well as to make an initial assessment of the support level they require. These forms may be completed over a number of sessions and should be done while simultaneously building rapport.

Levels of support should be reviewed by Development Coaches, other practitioners and service providers during supervision or planning meetings, a process that young people can help to inform through engaging with the Where Am I Now plan.

Better Futures does not provide one single linear support plan but rather a range of planning resources that support Development Coaches to ensure young people's voices are directing their planning and support needs. Services and practitioners can also choose to employ other resources to complement the Better Futures My Voice planning resources, which are outlined in Section 12 and Appendix 2.

Connection and outreach

Historically, when transitioning from care services many young people were unaware of the post care support available to them or they lost their connection with service providers. Better Futures mitigates this issue by capturing a snapshot of all eligible young people through the Early Referral process and continuing to maintain contact with them until the age of 21. It also ensures that service providers regularly and assertively reach out to check-in with those on Active Hold. This approach promotes earlier interventions and encourages more proactive work around identifying and supporting young people to engage with opportunities that will enable them to thrive.

Key activities	Notes
Updating and communicating with case managers prior to the closure of an order when young people are on Active Hold	Access to Better Futures support may be subject to service capacity
Contacting all young people upon closure of their order to inform them about Better Futures and other services and resources that are available to them	Development Coaches should make contact with young people on Active Hold before their order finishes
Quarterly check-ins for all young people on Active Hold in post care	Information about levels of support can be found in Section 8 and in the DFFH Practice Advice

By the end of the post care phase, young people actively engaged with Better Futures will

- Be informed of services, opportunities and resources available to them
- Have established stronger connections to personal and professional networks
- Have co-developed plans and be engaged with pathways to a sustainable future
- Have accessed resources and opportunities in line with their goals



PART IV THE BETTER FUTURES PRACTITIONER'S TOOLKIT

Part IV explores practice techniques for working with young people; offers an approach to creating connections and opportunities for young people across key life domains; and details how to support an Advantaged Thinking coaching approach with the My Voice planning resources.

Section 10: Practice techniques for working with young people

- Coaching
- Personal planning and support
- Experiential learning
- Group work activities
- Participatory and empowering practice
- Peer-led initiatives

Section 11: How we invest in young people using coaching

- The 5 Practice Areas
- The 5 Offers

Section 12: How we involve young people

- My Voice planning resources



SECTION 10

PRACTICE TECHNIQUES FOR WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Outlined here is a range of practice techniques that hold the ethos of reciprocity and the empowerment of young people as active agents in defining their own future. Better Futures Practitioners will need to employ and tailor techniques to each person's specific circumstances, needs and aspirations. They will also work as personal planners and group workers at different times and, as such, may employ a wide range of methods.

These techniques can and should be supported by existing best practice techniques that the workforce may already be equipped with, such as strengths-based, positive psychology, mindfulness, narrative-based approaches, motivational interviewing, solutions-focused therapy and trauma-informed practice.

In recognising that young people are the specialists in their own life story, key to engaging with them hinges on opening the conversation and prioritising an understanding of where they are at in their journey. Such an approach can enable young people, in the first instance, to navigate Better Futures, participate across the 5 Offers and go on to build sustainable livelihoods.

The Better Futures practice model uses coaching conversations centred around existing capabilities to empower young people to understand their own sense of self. These conversations encourage them to access the resources, people and opportunities that can help them expand their skills and capabilities and are pivotal to them building a sustainable livelihood.

When you have someone who actually knows you, they can give you proper advice and opinions that are relevant to you. When it's someone you don't know, they can't give you such relevant opinions.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

We know everything about their life, and how is it fair that they know nothing about us? They're meant to trust us completely but we're just a worker. So I bring in a bit of my personal life – where it's not too much – and I think that opens it up. Then it becomes a safe space for them to share with me and they're happy to. That personal element has been key for me engaging with young people.

— Development Coach, KYM

Relationships and positive interactions can be transformative and can inspire, motivate and enable young people to build their capabilities and reach their life goals. The techniques used will depend on:

- the method that will best support an individual's goals and circumstances
- the purpose of the interaction
- the people (staff/volunteers/external agencies) involved in the interaction
- the expected longevity of the interaction
- the spaces and places in which these interactions take place
- the skills and experience of the people involved.

We know that young people in care often have low self-worth and an internal narrative that is informed by trauma as well as other challenges of being in care. This can make even identifying one's strengths and dreams a difficult and sometimes confronting experience. Once the young person has been courageous enough to share their dreams, the next challenge is to be vulnerable and take the risk of meeting someone new.

Whilst a connection may seem like an amazing opportunity to us as practitioners, for young people who have been let down so many times before, it may seem like an endeavour fraught with risk. It is very likely that issues of trust, anxiety, fear, rejection and self-sabotage will present themselves throughout the connection process. It is important to continue to support the young person to make connections and to do so at their own pace, taking small steps to increase their readiness.

Behavioural challenges will occur as the young person wrestles with the difficulty of trusting someone new in the face of the disappointments and hurt they have already experienced.

It is our job to continue believing in the young person, to hold the positive vision they have articulated to us, until they can hold it for themselves⁵⁹

While there are several practice techniques for working with young people outlined in this Section, coaching is at the heart of Better Futures practice. It is the key technique for working with young people in a future-focused way.

Better Futures employs an innovative coaching approach to working with young people. The role of Better Futures Practitioners is relational, solution focused and goal oriented to support young people to become independent yet connected adults. Such an approach provides the Better Futures Practitioners with a conceptual framework and a range of planning resources and techniques to use with young people at different points within the life-cycle of the coaching relationship – from setting up personal coaching sessions to identifying and working with any limiting beliefs.

When it comes to making a decision, something that helps me if I'm overwhelmed is if someone can just sit with me, go through the pros and cons, and offer their opinion on what I'm trying to decide on. But not push it, just kind of guide and offer their perspective on it.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

Coaching is task oriented and it is the Development Coach's role:

- to recognise and build young people's personal and social skills, capabilities and knowledge
- to have expectations of, and make demands on, them
- to enable young people to think deeply and explore what is important to them
- to motivate them and facilitate further opportunities for their skills development
- to foster agency in young people through the use of evidence-informed planning resources and techniques.

In this relationship, young people are seen as capable, creative and the experts on their own life who can both analyse their current situation and determine their goals. The coaching conversation is predominantly future focused and motivational to assist them to set goals and determine a way forward to achieve them. By adopting a coaching rather than a case management approach to our work with young people, we are making a direct investment in their individual talents and skills, as opposed to investing in 'fixing' their perceived deficits.

Coaching is focused on a clear set of objectives and goals, which means that once these are achieved the relationship/mutual agreement between the Development Coach and the person being coached is able to come to a natural ending. As the young person begins to internalise this process and build formal and informal networks they will require less support from the Development Coach.

Personal planning and support

Better Futures works with young people to plan, facilitate and coordinate their access to resources, opportunities, networks and personal support. By pointing them in the right direction and facilitating their connections with key services, resources and opportunities, Development Coaches work with, rather than for, young people to progress their learning goals and objectives. They also work with them on achieving their individual goals across the 5 Offers of Education, Housing and Living Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Employment and Connections. There may be a coordination function within this role, but primarily the Development Coach is there to provide personal support and planning assistance.

Section 11 p. 66

How we invest in young people using coaching ▶ The 5 Offers

Go to

This practice model is greatly influenced by positive psychology and mindfulness, which means that our focus is on:

- reducing distress through enhancing self-awareness
- understanding our choices and decisions and clarifying our goals
- making sense of and coming to terms with past traumatic experiences
- taking responsibility for our own lives
- working in the 'here and now'.

Having an unbiased opinion on what I should do has always helped me. Like when I go and see a psychologist, or a professional like that, because they know me, know part of my history, I feel comfortable talking to them. It's also having that unbiased opinion back from them and seeing things from both sides as well. That's always helped me.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

Positive psychology recognises ‘that people want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves and to enhance their experiences of love, work and play’.⁶⁰ As such, Better Futures’ core aim is to equip young people with the skills to flourish and thrive rather than simply to cope or survive. The practice takes a proactive and preventive, rather than a reactive, approach to health and wellbeing, and attempts to equip young people with the skills to respond and act constructively to mental health challenges.

Experiential learning

Experiential learning is a technique that is often referred to as ‘learning through reflection and doing’⁶¹ and is sensitive to the hands-on learners who have typically struggled with more mainstream approaches to learning. It locates young people in environments where they are able to apply knowledge to real-world problems and scenarios.⁶²

There needs to be a lot more skills development offered, whether it be direct or indirect. Not just skills development workshops, but things that just naturally develop skills. CREATE does it with their camps. They'll take young people out for a three-day camp where they get to enjoy the experience and also mix in skills activities along the way.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

By providing a tactile method to learn through ‘concrete experiences’ in the ‘here and now’,⁶³ it allows young people:

- to test assumptions around goals and aspirations
- to make clear and personal observations about their own performance
- to be supported and instructed, and later encouraged, to reflect and actively experiment
- to re-assess their pathways or to move ahead with greater conviction and motivation.

This way of learning provides a supportive environment for those with experience of care services to engage with opportunities and become confident enough to take the crucial steps needed towards independence.

Practice example: Western Bulldogs and Whitelion partnership

The Community Connector is working with the Western Bulldogs Community Development Team to explore ways of increasing opportunities for young people. Planned opportunities include:

- ▶ organising tours for small groups of young people at the Bulldogs Whitten Oval offices/ grounds where they can hear about various employment pathways and potential career options available at an organisation like the Western Bulldogs
- ▶ hosting Community Days – organised activities for young people and volunteer mentors at the Whitten Oval or the Brayside Community Hub
- ▶ the Bulldogs offer to provide free tickets to a number of home games for young people and their mentors as a fun activity that will facilitate the ongoing mentoring relationship.⁶⁴

Group work activities

These types of sessions encourage discussion and free expression of opinion, thereby encouraging young people to discover their aptitudes, talents, weaknesses and strengths. The group and the facilitator can recognise leaders and enhance their capabilities through activities such as speaking up, mobilising, organising and planning.⁶⁵ It can also build young people's capabilities and opportunities and bring about changes and development in 'skills, knowledge, attitudes and values'.⁶⁶ One-on-one guidance and planning alongside group activities allows those involved to continue exploring and working on their individual goals in a confidential setting.

Some will need support to build confidence in, and readiness for, accessing and engaging with group activities, as explained here by young people from CREATE Foundation.

Section 4 p. 23

Young people as active agents of change ▶ Readiness and flexible support

Go to

Having low confidence and anxiety or nerves was a huge factor in not participating in social situations and going to things. I know there were a lot of other young people like that in residential care, who worried they might not feel like they fit in or that they were not going to feel accepted. All of those things definitely play a huge factor in young people's readiness to engage.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

Getting the confidence to go to events and activities is really hard. A lot of people look at something and they'll go, 'Alright, it might be about that, but I don't feel comfortable being there: they don't know me, I don't know them.'

I think it's more about trying to convince yourself that it's going to be alright. Opening up and taking that big step to be a part of something is hard when you've been let down so much throughout your life. The fear of it all crashing down like everything else does becomes quite overwhelming.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

The group work approach recognises that collaboration offers a pooling of expertise and resources within service delivery, which further aids the creation of sustainable outcomes. This is especially so for those who may have experienced disengagement from education and other mainstream opportunities and/or social isolation. Group work offers an opportunity for young people to build their social capital in community, with peers and across mainstream networks, all of which are more sustainable as they are not affected by staff turnover or funding restraints.

Participatory and empowering practice

Young people who have experienced care services are often passionate advocates for improving these services and, as such, can hold the potential to unlock innovative practice and operational solutions. Participatory and empowering practice promotes young people with lived experience as valuable assets. It supports their unique contribution and draws on their innate wisdom, interests and knowledge to be involved in discussions, events and opportunities. This can be fostered internally within organisations, as well as supported by any number of specialist services and bodies available in Victoria.⁶⁷

'How we involve people' – Advantaged Thinking services see young people as an opportunity. They believe that the experiences which have challenged young people also offer their own set of insights and qualities that can shape a positive future. Which is why it is essential, and not just a matter of enlightened youth work practice, to involve (as well as support) young people in both creating the solutions to their lives and offering their expertise to assist others.⁶⁸

Peer-led initiatives

As Kohler and Strain found 30 years ago, peer-led initiatives can increase young people's self-esteem and their sense of effectiveness and control in their lives.⁶⁹

All young people are equipped with talents, skills and interests and they also benefit from helping others.⁷⁰ Better Futures focuses on creating opportunities to develop peer-led initiatives that will shift attitudes towards young people from being welfare recipients to active members in the community with something to offer others. The benefits of this approach for young people include the enhanced self-esteem that comes from learning they have something to offer, a sense of control that can be empowering and a feeling of social usefulness. This is consistent with the evidence that those involved as peer 'helpers' tend to enjoy higher self-esteem than those who are helped by them, although these young people also gain from the interaction but to a lesser degree.

I was one of the young consultants that attended this thing through YPARC [Youth Prevention and Recovery Care]. It was all about the mental health of young ones and how we could improve it. There were a lot of things that the practitioners didn't know much about. It was really good to be able to explain, on behalf of the young ones, that they feel like there's no one there.

It would be a lot better if they had more young people involved in that kind of thing. It's just been really good learning about, not only my story, but everyone else's, and how they coped and how different things are.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group



SECTION 11

HOW WE INVEST IN YOUNG PEOPLE USING COACHING

Better Futures offers young person-centred planning across the 5 Offers and 5 Practice Areas by using coaching conversations, and other techniques explored in Section 10, to provide transitional and ongoing support to young people seeking connected independence.

Section 10 p. 56

Practice techniques for working with young people

Go to

As practitioners in the social sector, we need to take a flexible approach as we apply our practice in our day-to-day work. This means we are often challenged to wear multiple 'hats' as part of our roles. To best bring Advantaged Thinking to life, 'coaching' is considered an ideal way to have future-focused, motivational and goal-oriented conversations with program participants.

Coaches recognise the young person as the expert in their own life and so are focused on actively listening, and prompting new ways of thinking in the young person by asking open-ended questions. This might challenge some of the more dominant and familiar approaches to our work such as case management or counselling. The My Voice planning resources, discussed in Section 12, are designed to support Development Coaches operationalise coaching by bringing the young person's voice to life. This is done by leading their independence planning and development across the 5 Offers – something that casework does not do.

Section 12 p. 70

How we involve young people

Go to

Colin Falconer also encourages us to be a 'talent agent' in the way we approach our work.⁷¹ Think about what this term implies: that it is our role to showcase the skills and talents of those we work with to ensure they are connected to opportunities that will allow them to demonstrate their capabilities.

Better Futures staff understand that coaching is purposeful and deliberate. When entering into coaching conversations or experiences with young people we need to be aware of the aim and intent of the interaction we are cultivating. Coaching offers a space for young people to have agency and to become invested through working alongside a coach to co-produce and mutually commit to an agreed plan. It is also an active and dynamic process that changes over time as people grow, their skills develop and they recognise new areas on which they need to focus.

It is important to remember the principle of being community connected when working with young people. Our intent is to ensure that they can access the opportunities they need to engage in mainstream spaces and places, and that we are building their networks to create sustainable, thriving livelihoods and relationships with people beyond the services system.

The 5 Practice Areas

The Better Futures practice model recognises that, with the right set of investments, young people's talents can be identified and they can be coached to build their potential in these areas. Advantaged Thinking asserts that communities should invest in building young people's abilities and harnessing them for personal and social benefit. The practice model provides a framework to reflect upon when implementing an Advantaged Thinking approach across the 5 Practice Areas. Moreover, the Practice Principles in Appendix 1 offer practitioners a self-reflective assessment for examining ways to improve service delivery and integrate Advantaged Thinking practice.

Appendix 1 p. 76

Practice Principles of the 5 Practice Areas

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Coaching across the 5 Offers alone is not sufficient. We also need to attend to the context of the structures and supports around the young person. Effective coaching that uses Advantaged Thinking operationalises the 5 Practice Areas – Places, People, Opportunities, the Deal and the Campaign – by embedding them in every aspect of service delivery.



The Deal

Key question: What grows young people's understanding of, and gives them a real stake in, society?

Central to the practice model is 'The Deal', which represents an opportunity for young people to commit to something and be involved in the process of doing so in a practical way. It prepares young people for the real world and the expectations associated with sustaining an independent livelihood.

Holding high expectations of young people and investing in their capabilities instils in them a sense of being valued members of society who can contribute to, and hold a stake in, their own community. These high expectations must be matched by an investment in young people's capabilities. The Deal reframes the traditional power balance between young person and worker as one of equals with mutual accountability and reciprocity. It does this by clearly defining and upholding the rights and responsibilities of both the young person and the Development Coach. In turn, both are accountable for their actions and a culture of reciprocity is fostered, thereby expressing shared ownership of the service.

Appendix 2 p. 81

Overview of the My Voice planning resources ▶ The Deal

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Within Better Futures, the ethos of the Deal is embodied in a number of ways. It works to give young people more control by enabling them to understand:

- what they are committing to
- what is on offer to them
- how they can be involved in tailoring the approach
- how they can grow through the process to reach a more sustainable and positive adulthood
- how they can evidence their achievements.

The Deal is explicitly established and communicated through an agreement outlining the specifics in engaging with the Better Futures service, along with its shared values, principles and expectations. It sets up an agreement that clearly articulates the active role young people play in decision making, developing plans and engaging with activities across the 5 Offers of Education, Housing and Living Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Employment and Connections. The Deal is one of the tools employed by Better Futures to promote a safe and secure environment, which gives young people access to opportunities, resources and networks that will enable them to use their talents and develop a sustainable livelihood.



People

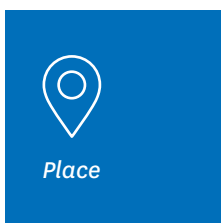
People

Key question: Which individuals enable young people to succeed?

To achieve their potential, young people need to be surrounded by individuals who believe in them and empower them. When we think about people in the context of Better Futures delivery, there are three main areas of focus:

- young people
- staff, mentors and Better Futures Practitioners
- community connections.

To deliver Better Futures successfully, the multidisciplinary staff and volunteer team will have a range of talents, skills, training and life experiences. Better Futures Practitioners will be entrepreneurial with the capacity to source opportunities, networks and resources from the community that will include education or industry experts. Community Connectors can use networking and liaising skills to build and seek out partnerships and networks within and across local communities to leverage community investment and strengthen young people's social capital and community connectedness. They will source opportunities to connect young people to community mentors, and to develop and deliver innovative practices outside of the traditional one-to-one mentoring model, including group mentoring and circles of support. Critically, all staff will hold strong beliefs in the abilities and capacity of young people to change their circumstances and to build sustainable livelihoods.



Place

Place

Key question: What inspires and makes young people to feel like they belong?

Place can look different across various programs, services and organisations. Fundamentally, we want to create places and environments that inspire young people and use inclusive design to make them feel like they belong. The places and spaces in which we learn and develop can affect the way we feel about ourselves, the people around us and the world in general. The levels of motivation and inspiration we derive from place should not be underestimated. The Advantaged Thinking approach focuses on creating places and environments that inspire and challenge, and that create belonging while nurturing talent, resilience, determination and courage.

When we think about place in the context of Better Futures delivery, there are three main areas of focus:

- Better Futures operational sites
- community spaces
- a young person's residence.

The communities in which young people live, learn, work and play have an important role in shaping their health and wellbeing. Community Connectors can harness this interrelationship by engaging young people in their community and building its capacity to develop and invest in their skills, talents and capabilities. Creating and supporting access to living and learning environments with an inspiring culture connects young people to real-world opportunities and enables their talents to thrive.

Mainstream access should be prioritised and services should minimise power imbalances, e.g., 'staff only' spaces, to demonstrate to young people that they are trusted and respected.



Opportunities

Opportunities

Key question: What enables young people to identify and promote their talents?

To be successful in achieving their goals, young people need access to opportunities, resources and networks that can promote and develop their talents.

Solely focusing on personal strengths or challenges, while important, ignores the structural aspect of disadvantage. People experiencing disadvantage have often been systematically denied certain opportunities and experiences that others take for granted. To hold high aspirations and achieve their goals, young people need to know of, and have access to, diverse activities and experiences.

In relation to Better Futures there are three key areas of opportunity:

- access – to educational, employment and public institutions and organisations
- resources – physical, financial, social and cultural
- networks – mentors, community connections, peers and public services.

Brokering opportunities for young people to understand their own sense of self is critical. To do so means developing partnerships with a range of stakeholders, especially from within young people's own communities which are rich with assets. The opportunities on offer should broaden horizons, prioritise mainstream participation and match people's aspirations and goals.

When we talk about opportunities, we can think about them across the 5 Offers, with each playing a vital role in facilitating successful transitions to adulthood. It is important to think of what our service can offer and connect young people to these various opportunities.



The Campaign

The Campaign

Key question: Who advocates for young people to be recognised as individuals with talent?

The Campaign advocates for young people to be recognised as individuals with talent. It seeks to challenge stigma and redirect common misperceptions that define young people through needs-based deficit models. The Campaign focuses instead on:

- recognising young people as individuals with valuable skills they can contribute to their community
- demonstrating that they have talent which can be nurtured into viable assets
- collaborating with community services, government and mainstream institutions to create structural change that enables their full social and economic participation.

We focus on, and we're getting a lot better with, our media presence – social media, traditional radio, TV and newspapers. Trying to work with those key media sources within Gippsland and bust myths about young people. We need to promote young people by really getting the understanding across that they are the future of our community, and not just people who are defined by their problems. A lot of people think homeless kids are runaways, kids that are naughty. But we know that the number one reason for homelessness is actually family violence. So that's part of the campaign, educating our community on that.

— Development Coach, Quantum

The means of developing and delivering on a Campaign include mentoring young people to become advocates for change. This can be done through:

- using positive language and focusing on success, especially through publicity and media
- developing practice planning resources with an Advantaged Thinking sensibility
- focusing on specific policy change on issues affecting young people
- investing in young people's talents.

The Campaign asks us to consider what actions we are taking to promote individuals who use our services and programs, including:

- the ways in which we are truly recognising and promoting the talents, skills and capabilities of young people to the wider community
- how our marketing and fundraising teams promote those with whom we work
- whether the images and stories we use are of disadvantage or advantage
- the scope of opportunities to advocate for change that is offered to those accessing our services.

The 5 Offers

In Better Futures, the planning and support presented to young people to achieve their goals in these areas are grouped under 5 Offers – Education, Housing and Living Skills, Health and Wellbeing, Employment and Connections.

Using the 5 Offers in practice empowers young people by investing in their capabilities and their ability to make choices and decisions about their own lives. How we view and value young people in the wider society influences the way we work with them, which in turn influences their ability to access opportunities and resources. If we consider engagement in education, employment and independent housing as critical achievements for transitioning young people, then service offers designed to realise these outcomes are crucial.

Although interconnected, each of the 5 Offers has clearly articulated goals, training, activities, opportunities, networks and resources. Young people can access, engage in, develop and tailor these Offers to suit their needs and aspirations over their time both in and following care. This also enables a flexible approach to planning that allows young people to maintain momentum or interest in some Offers, while temporarily placing less emphasis on other areas. For example, someone may be unable to progress education and training goals while receiving specialist mental health or therapeutic support, but can continue planning to live independently and be involved in living skills activities.

The My Voice planning resources support Development Coaches to work with young people to engage across the 5 Offers.

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Education

Education

Education is at the heart of the Offers as we know that young people who leave school early are three times more likely to experience social exclusion than those who have completed Year 12.⁷² A recent Victorian study found that only 25 per cent of surveyed young people transitioning from care services had completed Year 12, and 26 per cent had not completed Year 10.⁷³

... many children and young people entering [care services] are already educationally disadvantaged by demographic factors such as low socio-economic status and regional or Indigenous backgrounds. This background can be exacerbated by later in-care experiences such as placement instability or lack of support for completing education.⁷⁴

The Education Offer is designed to build young people's aspirations and motivation to engage with education. Through providing access to opportunities that recognise and foster their interests, young people are supported to co-design and participate in purposeful and sustainable education pathways that can lead to meaningful work. The Offer begins with the young person working with a Development Coach around recognition of prior or informal learning, affirmation of skills, talents and aspirations, and support with accessing, enrolling or sustaining engagement with training or education consistent with the agreed goals.

[Better Futures Education Offer Practice Guide](#)

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Practice example

The young person could be supported to explore courses and educational settings that are relevant to their goals, and receive assistance with enrolment processes and/or accessing flexible funding – for fees, materials, a laptop, etc. – that will support their participation.

**Housing and Living Skills****Housing and Living Skills**

This Offer is designed both to develop young people's knowledge and skills in preparation for their transition from care services, and to continue maintaining and managing their residency once independent.

The Housing and Living Skills Offer acknowledges that stable housing is crucial for good health and wellbeing.⁷⁵ This is evidenced by research examining the negative impacts that precarious housing can have on both physical and

mental health. As such, the provision of adequate housing can be considered a preventative health intervention,⁷⁶ along with developing the skills to access and sustain adequate housing.

Through the Housing and Living Skills Offer, young people will be supported to develop the knowledge and skills required to access and maintain a range of housing options, as well as key living skills such as financial literacy, legal rights and obligations, cooking and self-care. By maximising their education and training opportunities young people have the potential to increase their earnings, which will limit the ill-effects of precarious housing.

[Better Futures Housing and Living Skills Offer Practice Guide](#)

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Practice example

As part of their planning for connected independence, Better Futures could provide young people with access to opportunities that will develop living skills, such as cooking or budgeting, and/or to flexible funds that will enable them to use housing and legal services. They could also be supported to prepare and apply for stepping-stone housing options (such as Lead Tenant or Transitional Housing Management Program), as well as more long-term private residential rentals. Support could also include access to funds that will assist with housing establishment.

**Health and Wellbeing****Health and Wellbeing**

Health and wellbeing are critical to establishing successful education and employment pathways. For Johanna Wyn, Director of the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne:

... education and health systems are most closely associated with young people's wellbeing, along with families and young people themselves, neither system 'owns' wellbeing. Because neither system provides a basis for a systematic approach to young people's wellbeing, young people's wellbeing slips through. It is lost somewhere in between, an individual responsibility of young people and their families.⁷⁷

Through the Health and Wellbeing Offer, Better Futures aims to support young people to access, engage in and develop the skills needed to build positive physical, mental and emotional health.

The Offer is designed to enable young people to thrive by providing them with the opportunity to develop understanding and knowledge of, and skills relating to, good physical and psychological health. Better Futures prioritises wellbeing as an over-arching, coordinated part of the Offers and supports young people to build positive emotional experiences and respond to negative experiences in a healthy way. The Offer spans individual coaching, training and group activities as well as support to access specialist health services when required.

[Better Futures Health and Wellbeing Offer Practice Guide](#)

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Practice example

Better Futures providers could deliver group work or link young people into existing workshops on topics such as personal presentation, mindfulness or healthy eating and cooking, or facilitate access to existing programs such as Headspace, QUIT or AOD programs and services. Partnerships with mainstream and specialist health and wellbeing providers are critical to its success.



Employment

Employment

All young people experience the increased challenges and risks associated with transitioning from education to work in the modern economy, with youth unemployment more than double the overall rate.⁷⁸ Many of them are able to navigate this transition successfully with the financial and emotional support of their family. However, for young people in care the supports within their natural social ecology have often been disrupted. Placement moves during their in care phase can result in disjointed or broken links with education, which affects their level of education attainment and, ultimately, impacts on their ability to access the labour market.

... [care-experienced young people] do not always have reliable family support with which they can supplement their low incomes. As a result, unemployment or a low income can have serious consequences for their ability to maintain secure and stable housing, to engage in further education or to maintain their physical or mental health.⁷⁹

The Employment Offer is designed to enable young people to build a pathway to sustainable and meaningful employment. It provides consistent, sustained support for young people so they can remain focused on their career goals and access the resources needed to achieve them. The Offer does this by tailoring employment opportunities that are consistent with their age, developmental stage and experience of work. These opportunities include engagement in taster courses, work experience and volunteer positions, through to part-time and full-time work.

[Better Futures Employment Offer Practice Guide](#)

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Practice example

Better Futures Practitioners could support young people to prepare a resumé, apply for jobs or help broker connections to work experience or volunteer opportunities. This may include meeting with potential employers, linking with local councils or industry groups, and attending local job fairs or careers expos at TAFEs or universities. It could also include giving guidance and support to someone who has just started working, such as advice about dress codes, communicating with employers or negotiating around hours. Workplace mentoring of young people, along with links to employers and networks, are critical to the success of this Offer.



Connections

Connections

For young people to hold high aspirations and achieve their goals they need to know of, and have access to, diverse 'real-world' and mainstream opportunities beyond the services system. Young people whose primary supports are their families usually access these opportunities through extended family networks, which provide cultural links, education support, career guidance and modelling, and employment experiences and connections. For young people transitioning from care services, the availability of opportunities to engage in civic society are far more limited. As they move from care services to independent living, young people are often forced to prioritise general survival over participation in the broader social and economic life of their community. There can also be a lack of community understanding as to the difficulties these young people might face, which can lead to stigmatisation or discrimination and to additional demands on their physical, emotional and mental health.

Social exclusion can be defined as the systematic exclusion of people from full participation in economic and social life, in areas such as employment, community services, housing, social relationships or citizenship. It can mean, for example, being unable to afford a visit to the dentist, to find decent housing, to get a job, to upgrade skills, or lacking family and other supports to provide care when a serious illness strikes.⁸⁰

The Connections Offer focuses on improving young people's social capital and fostering opportunities for civic participation through developing personal relationships as well as social, cultural and economic networks. Relationships with people who value and support you are known to have a positive effect on wellbeing by building self-esteem and motivation to engage with others and the broader community. However, although existing relationships with family members can often be linked to trauma, the likelihood of young people returning to these settings also highlights the necessity of facilitating connections with kin where appropriate.

The Connections Offer provides opportunities for young people to develop their social, emotional and communication skills, and build thriving social relationships with friends, family and mentors. Furthermore, the Offer builds young people's networks including those that enhance their social ties and enable them to connect to the community, engage with culture, and access employment and other opportunities. It also helps to create positive purpose by providing opportunities for them to value and engage in activities for the benefit of others. Positive purpose has been linked with improved physical and psychological health outcomes including greater life satisfaction, optimism and resilience, higher self-esteem, and positive emotions.

Connections and trusting relationships are so important. In day-to-day life, you need to have some level of confidence and independence to feel comfortable and confident just to be able to do everyday things. It's also important for a young person to have someone like that who they are comfortable with to go to events or workshops with them.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

[Better Futures Connections Offer Practice Guide](#)

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Practice example

Better Futures Practitioners could access funding and support for young people to join a local sporting group, attend social events or access family therapy services. They could also support young people to campaign around an issue or a cause that is important to them, to develop or participate in community events such as cultural celebrations, or to undertake other forms of volunteering like helping out at a local soup kitchen. The Offer is founded on the understanding that developing strong personal relationships, as well as a positive purpose in life, helps young people to build the self-belief and skills necessary to achieve and sustain connected yet independent lives into the future.

SECTION 12

HOW WE INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE

Better Futures has a strong focus on recognising and promoting young people’s individual talents, skills and attributes, and then supporting them to develop goals and move towards their aspirations. It is all about collaborating with young people to set goals that are meaningful, and then taking steps towards achieving them.

To help them reach their goals the Development Coach will spend time coaching and supporting young people who are actively engaged with the service across the areas shown in Figure 13.

Better Futures practice elements (as shown in Figure 13) offer a cyclical framework that Development Coaches, Community Connectors and young people can use to tap into opportunities and connections across the 5 Offers and 5 Practice Areas using the My Voice planning resources.

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How we involve young people ▶ My Voice planning resources

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Figure 13: Better Futures practice elements



At the heart of all coaching conversations is our intent to work with young people in a way that sees them thrive. Part of that work is determining what thriving looks like to them and understanding and helping them to choose what they want to be. The Better Futures My Voice planning resources capture those key elements from coaching conversations and provide an alternative to typical case management practices when planning with young people.

Typically, during case work young people are required to tell their story over and over again to the large number of professionals who come in and out of their lives.

You tell your personal life to this person and then the new worker comes in and you've got to re-get-to-know them. You have to try and find a way to get along with them and then you have to re-tell them everything about your past, again. Then you have to find a connection strong enough so that you can actually share your personal life with them. In some of the cases, I haven't had much of a choice in this, you know what I mean?

—Young person from residential care, male, 18⁸¹

I want people to know that that we can achieve things. Just because I'm a child in care doesn't mean that when it comes to education – or something else that I'm interested in or I'm passionate about – that I can't excel in that and I can't do great things.

— Member of the Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group

Sound youth engagement techniques and the Advantaged Thinking approach lead the work; using the resources simply creates a way to ensure that the service involves young people in decision making and honours them as the author of their story.

The My Voice planning resources are designed to support young people to take the driver's seat when developing, exploring and experimenting with opportunities based on their aspirations and intrinsic motivations. The intention of these resources is to support young people to make plans based on what they want to do and who they want to be.

By documenting their voices in the resources, we show young people that their voice is directing the service and informing their next steps. For this reason, we encourage them either to be completed by, or co-developed with, the young person.

Figure 14: Coaching as a vehicle to planning



My Voice planning resources

Outlined here are the core Better Futures My Voice planning resources, all of which support an Advantaged Thinking approach. As such, they are aimed at:

- instilling the voice of young people into practice and planning for their future
- supporting them to articulate and achieve their goals
- encouraging them to hold high aspirations and take up new levels of opportunities.

The planning resources provide a way to assemble a broad picture of young people's interests and talents. These can be used flexibly to add on or swap out as appropriate to individual circumstances. Utilising the planning resources is recommended as part of the Better Futures service delivery to encourage consistency in services across the state.

Better Futures practice encourages a flexible and responsive way of working with young people that is not prescriptive. However, to provide a narrative for this Framework we have categorised the resources using the practice elements from the beginning of this Section. These elements demonstrate the cyclical nature of the practice as young people build their independence and reflect and redevelop their goals and aspirations. As such, Development Coaches will need to revisit these resources with young people to show how they have grown and what they have achieved on their journey with Better Futures.

The planning resources are described here and are then stepped out in detail with their purpose and rationale in Appendix 2. All are available as interactive PDFs that can be worked on using a tablet, phone or laptop.

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Overview of the My Voice planning resources

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[Better Futures My Voice planning resources](#)

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We have those resources accessible and on our desks to grab and have as a bit of a living document to develop at any time. So when you have those conversations with a young person in a text message or a phone call, chuck it down on their Vision or their map so it gets recorded.

— Development Coach, Meli

Investing in mutual contribution

The Deal

Central to Advantaged Thinking practice, the Deal fosters shared ownership of the planning, opportunities and services that constitute Better Futures. It speaks to mutual investment and mutual gain and the steps that all parties need to take to achieve these. When a Development Coach facilitates the entry of a young person into a form of social 'contract' with Better Futures, it instills a relationship of reciprocity and equality with the program itself.

While the Deal is imbued throughout all of our practice, it should be introduced early, preferably with reference to an individual's aspirations, interests or goals, as it asks for agreement as to when they are ready to engage in the program.

Something-for-Something proposal

Young people have a right to believe they can access support, opportunities and resources beyond just their basic needs. Something-for-Something asks them to showcase their skills and talents in return for an investment in their future. This process promotes reciprocity and giving back to the community, while also developing young people's capacities and sense of personal of worth by asking them to 'pass it on'.

Something-for-Something is not intended for all funding requests but offers a way to be creative with the application of flexible funds while also recognising young people's talents and brokering opportunities to showcase them.

Assessing readiness

Initial Readiness form

The Initial Readiness form is a young-person centred tool designed to highlight the strengths and aspirations of the young person, as opposed to their deficits. It is a way to understand the minimum supports that the young person may need. This resource supports a way of working that allows young people to identify where they think they are at. It also assists Better Futures Practitioners to assess someone's readiness to take up different levels of opportunities and activities, and together touch on a range of life areas and explore relevant motivations and challenges.

It is important to note that this process is about allowing the young person to identify what they believe to be their motivations and challenges. It is not about their story or what their case notes say nor is it an opportunity to record others' defined expectations of, or priorities for, the young person. Rather it is an opportunity for the young person to define that for themselves.

This form is intended to be completed during Early Engagement when the young person is still in care, or within the first month of a young person's active engagement in the post care phase.

Initial Fit assessment

This interactive PDF is used to interpret the information captured in the Initial Readiness form and aids the assessment of initial support levels. It is the only resource that is not for use by young people, but rather is generated by the Development Coach. The Initial Fit assessment automatically calculates the level of support and engagement a young person needs based on an assessment of their circumstances, motivations and challenges. The final result of this process enables service providers to adjust the outcome based on other knowledge or intuition.

Initial Readiness Map

The Initial Readiness Map offers a more informal or creative way to capture the information for the Initial Readiness form. It allows young people to engage in a conversation without the structure of the Initial Readiness form and gives them space to communicate more organically or creatively.

Developing a vision

My Vision

The My Vision resource promotes a conversation with young people about future aspirations and blue-sky thinking, and develops a holistic vision for their future. It gives them an opportunity to identify broad planning goals across the 5 Offers and enables a conversation that lays the foundation for further goal setting and planning.

The tool doesn't have to guide the practice, as Development Coaches are encouraged to work through this organically by digging deeper in coaching conversations. As the form can be built upon over time, you may have these conversations without the form and fill it in later, checking with the young person to make sure you have accurately captured what they want.

Deciding on my goals

This simple process helps young people to reflect on their aspirations, vision and progress, and to organise what is most and least important or urgent to them. It maintains an empowering tone that allows young people to set the agenda.

Informal Learning Map

The Informal Learning Map assists in the recognition of informal learning and affirms talents and skills. This process is intended to be conversational in nature between Development Coaches and young people. It can be used as a way of getting to know young people better, support their development, build their confidence or facilitate a process around developing a resumé.



Building connections and opportunities

Connections

For young people to develop a thriving and sustainable livelihood they need to be connected to people and opportunities beyond the service system. This resource guides our practice towards developing and collecting information on broader community connections, while also supporting young people to capture contacts and resources along the way. This, as with all Better Futures planning resources, should be informed by and led by young people.

Next Steps

Next Steps assists in creating an action plan, which can be related to young people's goals and interests or respond to their immediate needs. The agreed plan steps out the roles and accountabilities of the Development Coach and the young people, as well as mapping any broader networks of support.

Address Book

This resource contains information that supports connected independence. The Address Book assists young people in developing a personal contact list of networks across life domains and services that will remain available to them beyond the Better Futures active service timeframe. It may also include online supports like mindfulness apps, podcasts, inspirational speakers and videos.

Reflecting on distance travelled

Where Am I Now?

This resource not only provides an easy visual tracking of, and reflection on, a young person's overall progress to independence, but celebrates their achievements as well. It is a good resource to come back to at different points in the future to reflect on the young person's personal growth and development.

Reflection

This process promotes the recognition of achievements and affirmation of skills as well as providing an opportunity to reflect on the direction of goals and pathways based on actual experiences. This planning resource is best used after engaging with an opportunity or experience, and should foster a constructive dialogue about the next steps.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1
Practice Principles of the 5 Practice Areas

Appendix 2
Overview of the My Voice planning resources

Appendix 3
Examples of planning resources

Appendix 4
Trauma-informed practice

Appendix 5
Further Information about Home Stretch



APPENDIX 1

PRACTICE PRINCIPLES OF THE 5 PRACTICE AREAS

Advantaged Thinking is put into practice through 5 Practice Areas – Place, People, Opportunities, the Deal and the Campaign – which were outlined in Section 3 and expanded on in Section 11. Here we step out the main principles and practices that embed Advantaged Thinking in the Better Futures practice model through these 5 Practice Areas, along with checklists on the practice principles.

Place

Better Futures aims to connect young people with places that inspire them. Proximity to other services, groups and leisure facilities is central to the development of partnerships and networks, as it provides access to mainstream services, employers, education and courses. It also embeds both the program and the young people within their community.

Practice principles	Checklist
Creates spaces where young people can experience inspiration, a sense of belonging and motivation	<input type="checkbox"/> Are walls being used to display and/or create art? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the colour schemes bright and uplifting? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the imagery inspire? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there scope to get involved in designing the space? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the building have spaces in which young people enjoy meeting?
Prioritises engagement with employment, education and life-long learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there streamlined access to employment, educational, mentoring and volunteering opportunities? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the location close to transport, amenities, educational facilities and business opportunities? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the promotional literature on display geared towards aspiration rather than managing risk? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the activity timetable visible and reflective of the interests of young people? <input type="checkbox"/> Are there spaces in which they can learn, interact and share ideas peer-to-peer?
Fosters authentic, transparent relationships between staff and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Are shared spaces comfortable and inviting? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the space create opportunities for both incidental and intentional conversation and interaction? <input type="checkbox"/> Are all opportunities to share space between young people and staff maximised?
Illustrates and reflects that young people are valued and respected	<input type="checkbox"/> Are staff able and encouraged to share spaces, to have lunch and work alongside young people? <input type="checkbox"/> Does the design and decoration of the space reflect an attitude that young people are trusted with the space, rather than one of risk management?
Facilitates access to a range of places and spaces in the community	<input type="checkbox"/> Are high-level partnerships brokered at a level to facilitate streamlined access? <input type="checkbox"/> Are targeted community members, businesses and educational institutions encouraged to have a presence in Better Futures? <input type="checkbox"/> Are young people encouraged and supported to access mainstream opportunities?

Practice principles	Checklist
Enables greater reach for young people through the use of digital media	<input type="checkbox"/> Can staff use social media to reach young people? <input type="checkbox"/> Are digital mediums used to engage and interact with them where possible and appropriate?



People

Young people from care services often lack personal and professional connections. To achieve their potential, they need to be surrounded by people – community members, employers and staff – who believe that all young people are talented and valuable members of the community capable of acting on their own and on behalf of others.

Practice principles	Checklist
Inspires and challenges young people to achieve and promotes aspirations	<input type="checkbox"/> Are all planning resources and processes we use, geared toward empowering young people to make decisions and reach self-determined goals? <input type="checkbox"/> Are teams matching people and opportunities to raise young people's expectations and increase their choices?
Promotes the voice, integration and participation of young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Are young people engaged as leaders and experts in parts of the program? <input type="checkbox"/> Are they encouraged to be guest speakers and to communicate their own lived experience and advocate for the changes they see as necessary?
Fosters authentic, transparent relationships between staff and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Have Better Futures staff discussed what this means in their context and how they ensure that hierarchical relationships are limited? <input type="checkbox"/> Are staff practised in slipping in and out of roles to suit the scenario? <input type="checkbox"/> Is coaching practice used to create equal and non-judgmental relationships between staff and young people?
Enables young people to make positive change in their lives	<input type="checkbox"/> Are staff also engaging in coaching conversations that unpick limiting mindsets to enable change? <input type="checkbox"/> Can staff describe and explain the Advantaged Thinking approach? <input type="checkbox"/> Are all staff clear on their roles? <input type="checkbox"/> Do staff use Advantaged Thinking language? <input type="checkbox"/> Can staff clearly explain what they expect of young people and why? <input type="checkbox"/> Are the diverse skills, life experience and expertise of staff being used to full advantage in Better Futures? <input type="checkbox"/> Are staff trained in coaching? <input type="checkbox"/> Are staff aware of when they should use coaching, personal planning and support and group work techniques to the best advantage of young people?
Builds young people's networks and Address Book of contacts	<input type="checkbox"/> Are young people coached, upskilled and enabled to grow their contacts? <input type="checkbox"/> When they engage with new people, places and experiences are they coached to optimise their opportunity to build these contacts or networks?



Opportunities

For young people to hold high aspirations and achieve their goals they need to know about, and have access to, the diverse opportunities available to them. A critical part of the Advantaged Thinking approach is brokering these opportunities – through access to mentors, work placements, quality mainstream education, interactions with inspirational people, and participation in peer education and social campaigns – and matching them with young people’s aspirations.

Practice principles	Checklist
Inspires and challenges young people to achieve and promotes talent building	<input type="checkbox"/> Are young people building their Address Book of contacts? <input type="checkbox"/> Are they developing a map of formal and informal relationships that will continue to promote opportunities beyond the service system?
Prioritises engagement with employment, education and life-long learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Does the Better Futures service provider have partnerships with local education institutions, community health services, council, youth services, leisure facilities, local business and employment services? <input type="checkbox"/> Are mentoring opportunities brokered? <input type="checkbox"/> Are interactive ways of working on literacy resourced within Better Futures? <input type="checkbox"/> Are young people encouraged and resourced to take up volunteering or other civic opportunities? <input type="checkbox"/> Are they encouraged and supported into these opportunities as a way of building their skills? <input type="checkbox"/> Are staff ensuring that young people are linked with opportunities that inspire them?



The Deal

The Deal fosters a shared ownership of the planning, opportunities and services that constitute Better Futures. Getting young people to enter into a form of social ‘contract’, using the Something-for-Something proposal, instils a relationship of reciprocity and equality between them and the program itself. The Deal is a mutual investment for mutual gain and details the steps needed to assist young people to realise their individual goals and aspirations.

Practice principles	Checklist
Recognises and promotes the rights and responsibilities of all who engage with Better Futures	<input type="checkbox"/> Is the Deal agreement signed off on and revisited during a young person’s time in Better Futures? <input type="checkbox"/> Are staff living the Deal by sourcing opportunities aligned to the talents and dreams of young people? <input type="checkbox"/> Are young people living their side of the Deal by engaging with the opportunities? <input type="checkbox"/> Are all parties signing off on agreements and tasks associated with the 5 Offers? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the Deal lived through actions and use of language (e.g. ensuring that actions and agreements are shared)?
Empowers young people and staff by embedding reciprocity	<input type="checkbox"/> Are young people and teams living the Deal, by sharing responsibility and holding each other to account for agreements made? <input type="checkbox"/> Are young people supported to run some activities?

Practice principles	Checklist
Fosters authentic, transparent relationships between staff and young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Are staff facilitating an environment to ensure young people have self-determination over their goals? <input type="checkbox"/> Is the Something-for-Something proposal used for accessing financial support?
Enables young people to make positive changes in their lives	<input type="checkbox"/> If a dependency mindset was evidenced has this changed? <input type="checkbox"/> Are resources in place to measure progress and reward young people in meeting their goals? <input type="checkbox"/> Are they resourced to meet their side of the Deal?

The Campaign

The Campaign outlines an agenda for government, services and the broader community to change the way we look at, understand, think and talk about young people. It focuses on changing the sector's perceptions, where needed, by demonstrating that all people have abilities that can be nurtured, by promoting young people's talents and by providing them with an opportunity to have a voice and influence. It also proactively influences other service providers and the wider community to focus on young people's capabilities rather than their deficits.

Practice principles	Checklist
Empowers young people to become advocates	<input type="checkbox"/> Are young people involved in designing aspects of the program (e.g., in training materials such as videos, as guest speakers) and as organisers?
Values young people as assets to society	<input type="checkbox"/> Are they supported to engage with opportunities to advocate for change (e.g. participating in a Youth Advisory Group or the CREATE Foundation) <input type="checkbox"/> Are young people front and centre of any advocacy campaign?
Recognises and promotes young people's talents, skills and capabilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Is there a campaign within Better Futures to challenge needs-based policy and provision and espouse the Advantaged Thinking approach?
Promotes the voice, integration and participation of young people	<input type="checkbox"/> Are young people acting as peer leaders and having their experience of Better Futures valued by their continued inclusion? <input type="checkbox"/> Are they trained to respond to the media? <input type="checkbox"/> Is their voice promoted in media campaigns in a way that is in line with Advantaged Thinking, rather than using charitable/deficit-based approaches?
Acknowledges that access to education and employment is critical to change	<input type="checkbox"/> Are Better Futures staff working with education institutions, employers and community-based organisations, such as sporting clubs, to facilitate young people's access and pathways to mainstream opportunities therein?
Advocates for change based on the way in which we work, and provides a framework to do this	<input type="checkbox"/> Do Better Futures providers have agreements that create structural buy-in from institutions to Better Futures (this may include joint practice models, co-location agreements, etc.)?

APPENDIX 2

OVERVIEW OF THE MY VOICE PLANNING RESOURCES

Initial readiness

Task	<i>Development Coach, young person and support person (if available) engage with the Initial Readiness process</i>
Purpose	<p>Young person identifies where they think they are at</p> <hr/> <p>Establish a dialogue about individual talents, interests and aspirations</p> <hr/>
Rationale	<p>The Initial Readiness conversation is designed to position young people at the core centre of the process</p> <hr/> <p>This process is designed to be collaborative and conversational. The method of collecting information allows flexibility to enable the best mode of communication</p> <hr/> <p>The questions speak to the young person's strengths, motivations and challenges</p> <hr/> <p>Early identification of opportunities to engage with young people in line with their aspirations or interests</p> <hr/> <p>This process may take more than one conversation to complete depending on the young person's capacity to engage</p> <hr/>
Who	<p>Young person</p> <hr/> <p>Development Coach</p> <hr/> <p>Support person (optional)</p> <hr/>
Task	<i>Initial Fit assessment</i>
Purpose	<p>Assessment based on questions weighted towards challenges and motivations that enable the identification of initial level of support</p> <hr/> <p>To be completed within one month of active engagement with the young person in the post care phase</p> <hr/>
Who	<p>Development Coach</p> <hr/> <p>Better Futures Team Leader (sign off)</p> <hr/>

The Deal

Task	<i>Discuss, agree and sign the Deal</i>
Purpose	<p>The Deal is a reciprocal agreement between Development Coach and the young person, which sets out the expectations of both</p> <p>The Deal sets the scene for engagement and ensures that both the young person and the Development Coach agree on their key responsibilities</p>
Rationale	<p>The Deal lists 8 agreements that clearly outline the expectations around meeting key parts of the Offer</p> <p>Each point allows the young person to contribute to what they will bring to the table in response to the Offer</p> <p>It outlines expectations of both the Development Coach and the young person – What you can expect of us and what we expect of you</p> <p>Both the young person and the Development Coach sign the Deal in agreement</p> <p>The Better Futures Team Leader or Manager also signs the template to demonstrate commitment to the Deal at an organisational level</p>
Who	<p>Young person</p> <p>Development Coach</p> <p>Better Futures Team Leader/Manager (optional)</p>

My Vision

Task	<i>Young people complete the Vision Map</i>
Purpose	To assist young people to identify a range of aspirations to develop a holistic vision for their future
Rationale	<p>The resource introduces planning across the 5 Offers</p> <p>This process enables a person-centred conversation and lays the foundation for further goal-setting and planning</p>
Who	<p>Young person</p> <p>Development Coach</p>

Where Am I Now

Task *Young person identifies their progress on the Independence Map*

Purpose To provide a visual way for young people to reflect on their current circumstances and track it in relation to their overall progress towards independence

Rationale The Independence Map is a visual plan that provides a snapshot of a young person's progress towards their goals and aspirations across the 5 Offers

This plan helps to reflect on progress as well as to identify areas that may require more attention

Who Young person

Development Coach

Connections

Task *To establish peer and community supports*

Purpose To connect young people with opportunities beyond the service system

Rationale Developing strong relationships with peers and wider community connections while building a range of contacts and resources

Opportunities to practise skills in developing a thriving and sustainable livelihood

Who Young person

Development Coach

Initial Readiness Map

Task *Development Coach and young person complete a Map*

Purpose To allow the young person to engage in a conversation that will capture information to complete a Readiness form

Rationale This resource introduces planning across the 5 Offers

This process enables a person-centred conversation and lays the foundation for further goal-setting and planning

Who Young person

Development Coach

Next Steps

Task	<i>Young people create an Action Plan</i>
Purpose	To assist in turning opportunities into an Action Plan that is developmental and future focused. Opportunities could include having immediate support to achieve a goal or to request support for a specific need
Rationale	The Action Plan can be related to goals, an interest or immediate need, and steps out the roles and responsibilities of the Development Coach and the young person as well as mapping broader networks of support It maintains an empowering tone that allows the young person to set the agenda
Who	Young person Development Coach

Informal Learning Map

Task	<i>Young people complete the Informal Learning Map with Development Coach</i>
Purpose	To reflect on a young person's formal and informal learning and existing skills To recognise skills and affirm capabilities
Rationale	This process recognises a young person's capabilities and sets an Advantaged Thinking tone for future engagement The questions facilitate positive reflection on prior experiences and lay the foundation for goal setting
Who	Young person Development Coach

Deciding on My Goals

Task	<i>Young people prioritise the 5 Offers</i>
Purpose	To help young people reflect on their aspirations, vision and progress by organising the 5 Offers from the most to least important/urgent
Rationale	This resource assists young people to narrow their focus and enables them to identify a starting point to initiate goal setting It maintains a tone that empowers them and allows them to set the agenda
Who	Young person Development Coach

Something-for-Something proposal

Task *Accessing support for a need*

Purpose To enable young people to submit a proposal whereby they offer to 'pay something forward' in exchange for resources that may not be closely aligned with a core goal

Rationale This opportunity further embeds the Deal and the culture of reciprocity that is integral to developing connected independence

The process promotes reciprocity and giving back to the community

Who Young person

Development Coach

Reflection

Task *Young people undertake a reflective practice after engaging with an activity, experience or taster*

Purpose To use actual experiences as a basis to review and develop planning and future pathways

Rationale Reflection is a key stage in learning and development

Young people link their interests and aspirations to activities, experience and tasters, and to reflect on these to assist motivation and the development of goal-setting

Who Young person

Development Coach

Address Book

Task *Young people regularly collect contacts and update information*

Purpose The Address Book gives young people access to, and ownership of, their contacts and opportunities

This resource contains a database of information that will support connected independence

Rationale The Address Book develops a personal contact list of networks across the 5 Offers that will remain available to young people beyond the reach of services

A copy will be held by the Development Coach who will provide additional copies as requested or required

The Development Coach will support and encourage young people to establish and maintain contact with their networks

Who Young person

Development Coach

Mentor

APPENDIX 3 EXAMPLES OF PLANNING RESOURCES

CONNECTIONS

Identify the most important contacts and resources that may be able to help you in this area of your life.

Select Service Offer

Education Employment Health & Wellbeing Connections Housing & Living Skills

Aspirations / Goals

Resources & Notes

People, services or information I draw on for support?

Phone: Email: Phone: Email:

Phone: Email: Phone: Email:

Phone: Email: Phone: Email:

ME

INITIAL FIT TOOL

Participant's given name | Participant's family name |

Participant's date of birth | / / | Date Initial Readiness engaged | / / |

Demotified Fit assessed | / / | Development Coach |

ABOUT THE INITIAL FIT TOOL

The Initial Fit tool assesses the level of support offered to a participant upon entry into the Better Futures Service. It does this by measuring their motivations and challenges across a range of domains. This assessment is only preliminary and will be reviewed within one month of engaging with Better Futures post-care service.

There are 3 sections to this tool:

- Initial Readiness Assessment
- Capability Readiness
- Initial Assessment of Level of Support

WHEN TO USE THE INITIAL FIT TOOL

- The Initial Fit tool is to be used as soon as the Initial Readiness form has been completed.
- The Fit tool is to be used to assess the Initial Readiness form.

HOW TO USE THE INITIAL FIT TOOL

- Follow instructions at the top of each section.
- Once all three sections are complete, the final page must be populated before submitting to manager/team leader.

INITIAL READINESS ASSESSMENT

Directions

- Use the headings on the table below to navigate to the relevant sections in the Initial Readiness form.
- Use the letter designation: C in the Initial Readiness Form to identify and populate the answers below. The key symbols are C – Challenges and M – Motivation.

EMPHASIS	
C Challenge - highest level of study	M Motivation towards employment
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. University, TAFE, apprentices, Year 12, Senior VCEAL 2. Year 10 to 11, Foundation or Intermediate VCEAL 3. Year 9 or earlier 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Already employed / volunteering 2. Like to work towards employment / volunteering 3. Don't mind being unemployed

INITIAL READINESS FORM

Date reviewed | / / | Date reviewed | / / |

PERSONAL DETAILS

Given name | Family name |

Date of birth | / / | Age | Gender |

Address |

Phone | Email |

Country of birth | Preferred language |

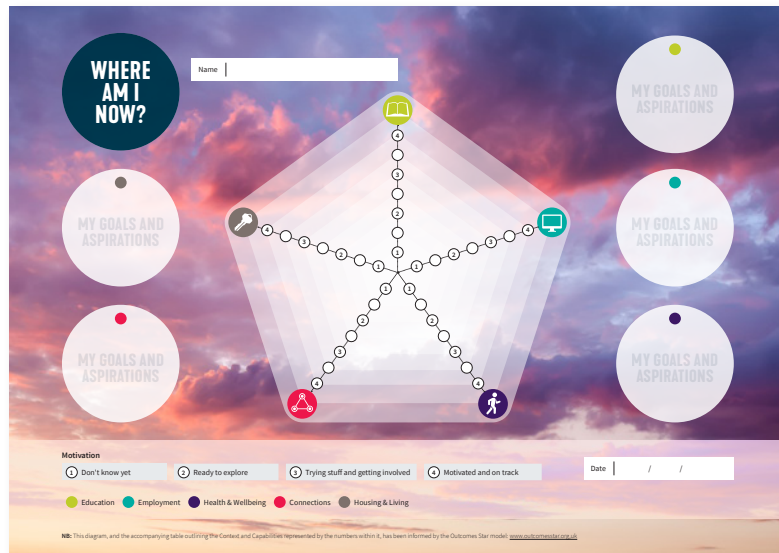
How would you describe your current residency status?

Australian
 Permanent resident
 Temporary resident (visa/visa holder)
 Other (please specify):

Do you identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Both Neither

Challenges Motivation



INFORMAL LEARNING MAP

Tell me about what you like to do (hobbies, interests, how you spend your time)

What is your favourite activity or what do you enjoy doing the most? What have you learned from doing this?

How would someone who knows you best describe you?

Can you think of times where you surprised yourself with something good that you have achieved? If so can you tell me about some of those times?

Describe some strategies you've used to deal with a challenging situation

MY GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

MY GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

MY GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

MY GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

MY GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS

Name |

PART I

PART II

PART III

PART IV

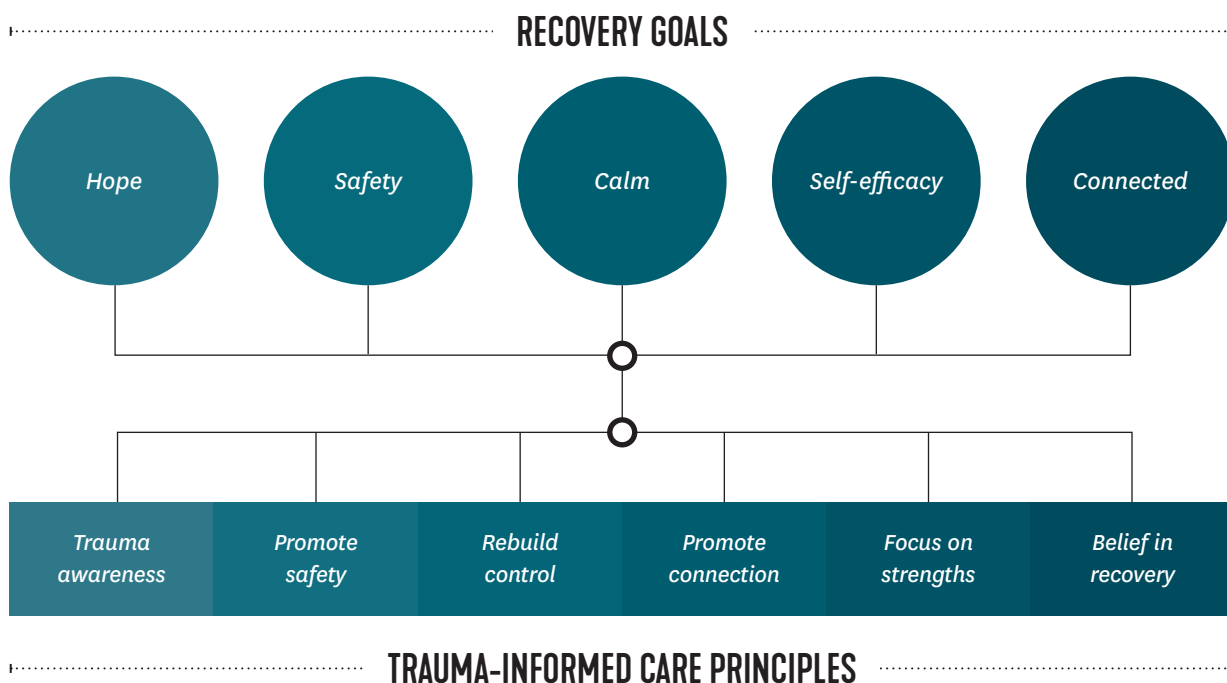
APPENDICES

APPENDIX 4

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE

Figure 15: A model for trauma-informed care⁸²

NB: Figure adapted from training materials by Phoenix Australia and The University of Melbourne



Many young people coming through care services have been exposed to threatening events or situations that cause emotional or physical damage.⁸³ Sometimes the serious nature of these experiences overwhelms their ability to cope causing a prolonged alarm reaction.⁸⁴ The enduring and broad-ranging symptoms caused by these events are known as trauma.

Many Better Futures staff have been trained in trauma-informed practice, which is helping them to recognise the signs of particular behaviour, habits and practices with reference to trauma, and to offer the young person involved emotionally safe ways of working to assist in their recovery. The Advantaged Thinking approach, coaching techniques and person-centred resources offer a clear way of working with young people that support the recovery goals connected to trauma-informed practice principles.

Trauma-informed care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.⁸⁵

The Victorian Government Department of Families, Fairness and Housing's Framework for Trauma-Informed Practice states:

A trauma-informed approach upholds the safety, dignity and wellbeing of both people using and people delivering services. It is supported through policies, principles and practices at practitioner, service and system levels that centre on empathy and reflection; that seek to understand, rather than pathologise; and that recognise people as experts in their own lives. Working with, rather than working for, is a key tenet of a trauma-informed approach.⁸⁶

The development of the Framework for Trauma-Informed Practice prioritises the voice of lived experience. It seeks to build enhanced and consistent ways of working with people experiencing trauma across child and family services, including family violence services.

APPENDIX 5

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT HOME STRETCH

Home Stretch includes the following three service components, which are individually allocated to young people:

- accommodation allowance, via either of the following approved accommodation types:
 - ▶ home-based care
 - ▶ independent living
- case work support provided by a Better Futures worker
- access to flexible funding to facilitate the young person's access to housing, education, employment, health, wellbeing support and community connections.

The funding for these supports is portable, meaning it can move with them if required.

To be eligible for Home Stretch, a young person must be:

- referred and linked to Better Futures
- in formal care (including kinship, foster and permanent care as well as residential care and lead tenant arrangements)
- subject to a care by Secretary order, a long-term care order or a family reunification order on or after their 16th birthday.

From 1 July 2021, Home Stretch was extended to young people on permanent care orders, providing access to Home Stretch supports from the cessation of the permanent care order at 18 years of age up until their 21st birthday.

Home Stretch service response commences after a young person's Child Protection order ceases for the final time (or in some circumstances after the cessation of other post order funding arrangements) and ends when the young person turns 21 years of age. Some young people receive extended funded supports for a limited period via Targeted Care Packages post order. In this instance, if an application to access Home Stretch was approved, Home Stretch funding and service response commences at the end of the Targeted Care Packages funding arrangement.

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