Lived experience voices:

insights into young people's transition from the child protection and youth justice system in South Australia and the intersections with homelessness

November 2022

Executive Summary

Young people with experience of child protection or youth justice systems are disproportionately represented amongst Australia's homeless population. Unacceptably, our child protection and youth justice systems leave children and young people vulnerable and at risk of homelessness.

Each year, approximately 10,000 to 11,000 children and young people nationally are discharged from out of homecare (OoHC), with 15–17-year-olds consistently the largest age group to exit. Leaving care is a critical transition period where case management ceases and often funding and access to services and supports are dramatically reduced, while the needs of young people have not reduced. There is little evidence of the perspectives of the young people who have made these transitions and their views of what would have improved their transition.

How we did it

This work is part of the Constellation Projects Better Journeys initiative that took place in 2021 -2022 with a team of volunteers which included people with lived experience of this transition, who undertook a research project to better understand the experience of young people transitioning from out of home care and youth justice. This solution focused team comprised people from across services, academia, lived experience and business providing a range of skills and insights into the development, process and delivery of this report.

Our research

Our research shows that many will face a tough transition, and in some cases, homelessness. This is not surprising as the rate of young people experiencing homelessness who have a history of involvement with the Child Protection (CP) and Youth Justice (YJ) systems is high, pointing to a large systemic failure.

Despite policies and processes designed to protect young people, this report finds the young people interviewed did not feel supported or ready to leave the systems when the time came to move into independent living. Nor did the practitioners involved in these systems judge support to be adequate.

Developing solutions with those who know

Lived experience is critical in offering insights that may not have been considered previously so that policies and services being developed and implemented meet the needs of their intended beneficiaries. People with lived experience have a unique awareness of how policy decisions and social structures affect them and the community that they are part. To effectively measure the quality of current policies and services and shape future ones, we need these voices at the table.

This document is designed to provide information that assists key stakeholders, from community members to those with paid roles or formal authority, in understanding the needs and aspirations of young people. The information provided in this report can be utilised to better respond, reflect, plan, design and embed the voices of lived experience in service reform.

This report highlights the role that young people with relevant lived experience need to play in informing policies and services that directly effect them.

Our Findings

It is essential that lived expertise is elevated, listened to, and acted upon to respond to the systemic barriers that contribute to the challenging transition from CP and the YJ systems and to address the risk of homelessness. Our collective responsibility is to make the necessary changes so that young people are supported in their transition from OoHC and the YJ system to thrive into adulthood.

Our key findings

1. Many young people do not feel prepared or ready to transition from CP and YJ systems to independent living on the mandated date

2. There is a lack of knowledge and awareness of services and support to assist young people with their transition to independence

3. A strong relationship between young people and case managers is particularly important and valued part of the journey to independence for young people.

4. The transition for young people involved with both the child protection and youth justice systems is particularly difficult.

Future directions: eleven components for holistic support for young people leaving the child protection and youth justice systems

 1. Leaving care plan

2. Cultural Plan/Connection to Culture

3. Healthy relationships

4. Housing assistance

5. Financial support

6. Education pathways

7. Employment and employment programs

8. Connection to birth family

9. Life skills development

10. Health and wellbeing

11. Affirmational guidance

Contents

Acknowledgement

This report was created on the land of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains.

We acknowledge and respect the Traditional Custodians of the Country on whose ancestral lands we live and work on. We respect their ongoing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to Elders, past, present and emerging. We are committed to honouring all First Nations Peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships with their country.

Acknowledgement

We give our deep appreciation to the young people who gave their valuable time and shared their experiences and insights through interviews. We hope we have done justice to the stories you shared and that your voices are listened to and acted upon. We also deeply thank the people who work with young people in the child protection and youth justice systems that spoke with us and/or supported young people in speaking with us.

Lived Experience Voice

This report includes the views and experiences of young people who have transitioned from child protection and youth justice systems in South Australia, as well as practitioners within these systems. Care has been taken to share their perspectives with only minimal edits for the purposes of length and clarity.

The artwork featured in this report is by Jessie Scott, a Youth Inc student who was asked to create an artistic interpretation of the quotes from young people and key findings included in the report. The artist's interpretations of each piece are included in Appendix

Foreword
by Lorna Robinson

It is with great excitement that I introduce the findings of Constellation's work to understand the challenges young people face when exiting the child protection and youth justice systems. As someone who has been there myself, it was a privilege to lead open and honest conversations with my peers about the reality of what young people face and the close connection to homelessness.

Young people currently transition from the child protection and youth justice systems on a set date, often marking a dramatic reduction in supports and without the planning, skills and relationships to thrive. We are asking you to consider - *what if young people could transition when they feel ready to, rather than when the system tells them to? And what if we used their insights to create an environment of holistic support?*

This was our starting point in the Ready Transitions Team, a small, dedicated cross-sectoral team of passionate individuals, including people who have experienced homelessness. We sought to bring the voices of those with lived experience to the foreground, alongside the existing data and evidence of the poor outcomes young people can face. Our mission is to inspire and appeal to decision-makers' hearts and minds so that they will act by putting young people's recommendations into action.

The focus of this report is on young people's experiences when leaving OoHC or youth detention. While these are separate systems, they have in common the risk of homelessness.

The limited existing research was the most significant hurdle in compiling this report. A 2021 study by the Centre for Social Impact found:

"While young people's perspectives have sometimes featured in general research… there has been no systematic research into young people's perspectives on what helps them achieve positive housing outcomes following youth justice detention…particularly research led from a "lived experience perspective."[1]

Our research, which includes both desktop and qualitative findings, aims to help fill this gap. Speaking with people who have direct experience of youth detention and out-of-home care, as well as practitioners working in these systems, confirms what the data tells us about the social and systemic barriers that make it challenging for young people to transition to independence.

I spoke to four people with lived experience of out of home care or youth detention and homelessness in South Australia. Their voices are highlighted throughout this report, alongside insights from people with professional experience in these systems. Sadly, the message was clear that young people are frequently forced to leave the child protection and youth justice systems without adequate preparation for life.

The increased risk of homelessness and negative outcomes for young people who have been in the child protection or the youth justice systems is a human rights issue. The voice of those who have exited these systems and experienced homelessness is critical to initiating the change required to address it. It is our collective responsibility to create the changes needed so that young people thrive once they transition to independence.

I'm grateful that my own experience could help develop the trust needed to get these insights out into the world and I'm hopeful for the change that this can lead to in the systems that are designed to support young people. We invite you to join us in our advocacy for the realisation of the rights and needs for young people and to further involve them in the policies and practices that require change.

" **There is so much power in these stories to drive change. Their profound reality can bring social issues to the forefront by making them real to others and evoking emotions and personal connection.**

It's incredible that the people I spoke with trusted me and were willing to talk to me about such sensitive personal experiences. I believe that elevating these voices has been my greatest accomplishment and contribution since joining Better Journeys."

Ready Transitions

Introduction

When children and young people exit the child protection (CP) and youth justice (YJ) system, many will face a tough transition, and in some cases homelessness. This is not surprising as the rate of young people experiencing homelessness who have a history of involvement with the CP and YJ systems is high, pointing to a large systemic failure.

The increased risk of homelessness for young people is evident, with data showing that more than one in twenty people who accessed both specialist homelessness services (SHS) and YJ services were sleeping on the streets at the end of SHS support, and 17 per cent of young people who accessed all SHS, YJ, and CP services reported experiencing more than one instance of homelessness during four years, compared to six percent of people who accessed solely SHS.[2]

Despite policies and processes designed to protect young people, this report finds the young people we interviewed did not feel supported or ready to leave the systems when the time came and move into independent living. Nor did the practitioners involved in these systems judge support to be adequate.

Lived experience
"The knowledge and understanding a person receives when they have lived through an experience."[127]

Lived expertise
"The knowledge, insights, understanding and wisdom gathered through lived experience."[128]

Our Key Findings

1. Many young people do not feel prepared or ready to transition from care to independent living on the mandated date.

2. There is a lack of knowledge and awareness of services and support to assist young people with with their transition to independence.

3. A strong relationship between young people and case managers is particularly important and valued part of the journey to independence for young people.

4. The transition for young people involved with both the child protection and youth justice systems is particularly difficult.

Our study findings support the case for a critical look at the systemic and social structures that contribute to the increased risk of homelessness for young people with experience of the CP or YJ system. Further research with more young people who have experiences of these systems, across jurisdictions, should be commissioned by governments with a view to genuine reform that is meaningfully co-designed and co-produced. Lived experience voices must be elevated, heard, and taken seriously. Young people leaving the systems must be encouraged and supported to have a voice and be involved in decision-making, planning, implementation and, continuous review of the systems supposed to support them.

This report is structured in three sections

1   Our child protection and youth justice systems leave vulnerable children and young people at risk of homelessness
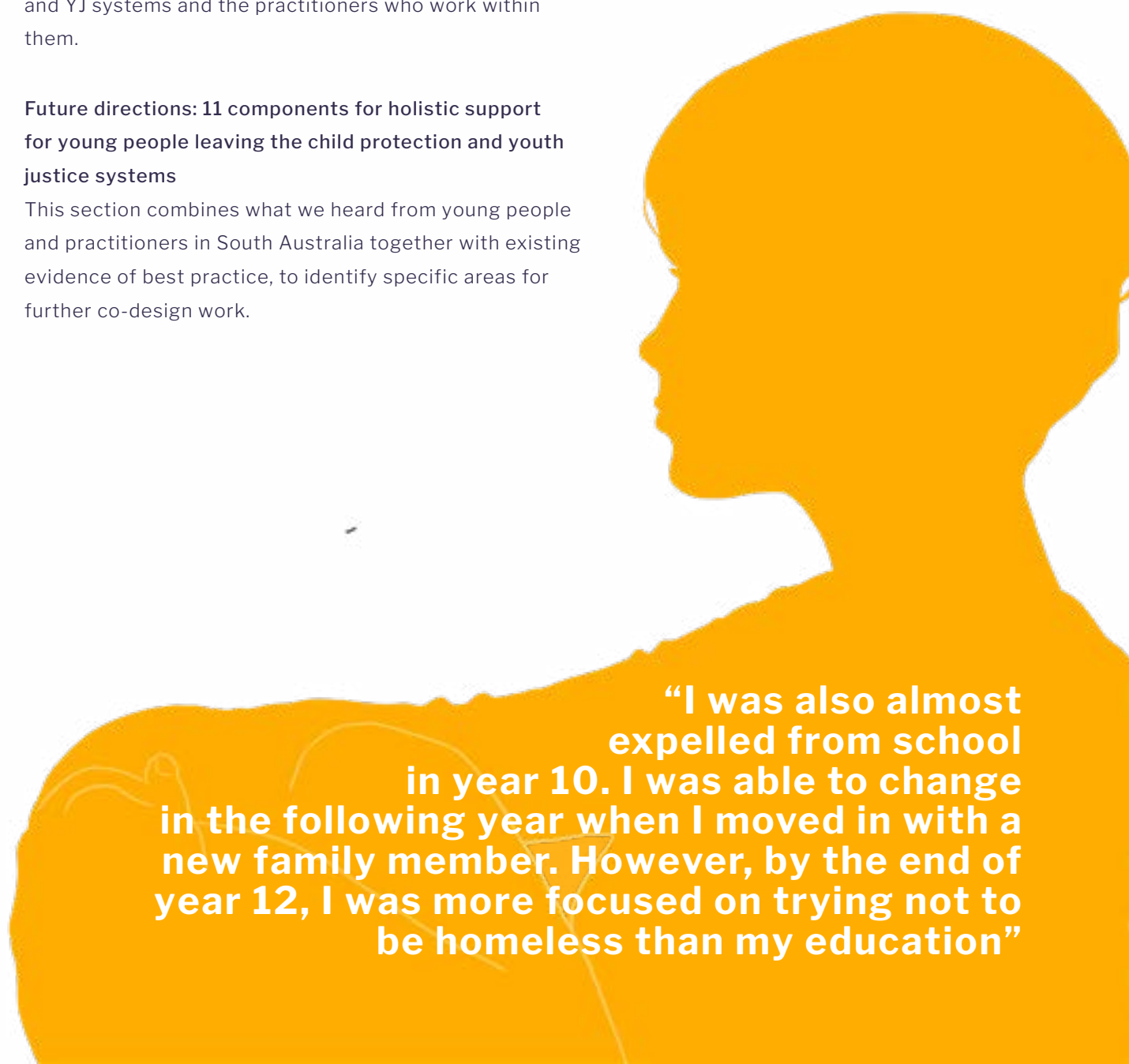
This section gives a brief overview of the numbers and scale of vulnerable children and young people in Australia who come into contact with the CP and YJ systems.

2   Listening to those who know: South Australian case study

This section outlines findings from the experience and insights of young people with lived experience of the CP and YJ systems and the practitioners who work within them.

3   Future directions: 11 components for holistic support for young people leaving the child protection and youth justice systems

This section combines what we heard from young people and practitioners in South Australia together with existing evidence of best practice, to identify specific areas for further co-design work.

"I was also almost expelled from school in year 10. I was able to change in the following year when I moved in with a new family member. However, by the end of year 12, I was more focused on trying not to be homeless than my education"

Our child protection and youth justice systems leave vulnerable children and young people at risk of homelessness

Failing the most vulnerable

Children and young people have the right to grow up, learn and develop in a safe and loving home. But for far too many this is not the reality, even when drastic intervention occurs.

The systems designed to help children and young people provision of care outside of their immediate family in OoHC 'rehabilitation' through youth detention or supervision often fail to address their needs and leave young people ill-equipped to transition successfully to independent living when the time comes.

Leaving care is a critical transition period where case management ceases, and often funding and access to services and supports dramatically reduce, however, the young person's needs do not reduce.

Child protection

During 2020-21, more than 178,800 children and young people had contact with the CP system in Australia. This means they were either subject to notifications of abuse, neglect, or had substantiations of abuse or neglect made following a statutory investigation. In child protection cases where the risk of harm is assessed as significant, care and protection orders are sought to remove a child or young person from an unsafe home into OoHC, transferring whole or partial parental responsibility to a government department or relevant minister in charge. As of 30 June 2021, 46,200 children and young people were in OoHC nationally.[3]

Research tells us that the long-term outcomes for young people in care will be poor across several life domains. Young people in care settings are likely to have disrupted education and lower school completion rates, diminished employment prospects and earning capacity,[4] and be at greater risk of youth and adult homelessness.[5]

Each year, approximately 10,000 to 11,000 children and young people nationally are discharged from out of home care (OoHC) are, with 15–17-year-olds consistently the largest age group to exit.[6] Leaving care is a critical transition period where case management ceases, and often funding and access to services and supports dramatically reduce, however, the young person's needs do not reduce.

In recognition of the vulnerability of care leavers, most State and Territory Governments have committed to policies of raising the age of leaving care to 21 and provide some form of 'after care'. Supporting care leavers until the age of twenty-one can improve their health and well-being and lower substance and alcohol use. Extending support for young people in care is also said to improve social connectedness and life outcomes for care leavers and their children.[7] The initiative's benefit to cost ratio is 2.0, showing that it could generate a $2 return on investment for every $1 spent.[8]

Youth justice

A similarly vulnerable group, where there is often overlap with the CP system, is children and young people involved with the YJ system. During 2020-21, 9,352 children and young people were placed under a total of 59,687 YJ supervision orders (community-based and youth detention) in Australia.[9] In the same period, 5,974 completed their orders,[10] including 4,056 young people who exited detention a total of 8,227 times.[11]

The discharge process for young people in the YJ system is insufficient. Worryingly, there is no guarantee of support for young people once they leave the system. When a young person leaves the YJ system, they are often required to stop receiving support from services and people they have grown to trust, as they are often no longer eligible for these services or are not permitted to maintain contact or have a connection with staff or other young people who may be important

parts of their support system. More support must be provided and changes must be made to the processes and policies that limit a young person's ability to choose how they adjust to life after leaving the YJ systems.

While evidence shows that children aged ten to fourteen are not fully capable of understanding the implications of their actions, and that raising the age of criminal responsibility reduces offending and contact with the adult justice system, improves future outcomes, and reduces government costs, Australia is one of the few countries that has not taken on board this recommendation.

In Australia, children as young as ten are criminalised, arrested, and put in prison.

To address this, a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and medical, and human rights groups joined forces in 2022 and launched a national campaign calling for the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Australia to be raised to fourteen.[12]

According to ACT Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury, the ACT Government plans to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years of age in 2023, and then to 14 years within the following two years.[13]

Emma Davidson, Minister for Youth Justice in the ACT says this will be revolutionary for coming generations, allowing young people to live healthier, safer, and happier lives, improving social and justice outcomes across the community.[14]

Raising the age would lower the risk of homelessness for these young people.

A short path into youth homelessness

**" I just turned eighteen and they told me to leave."**
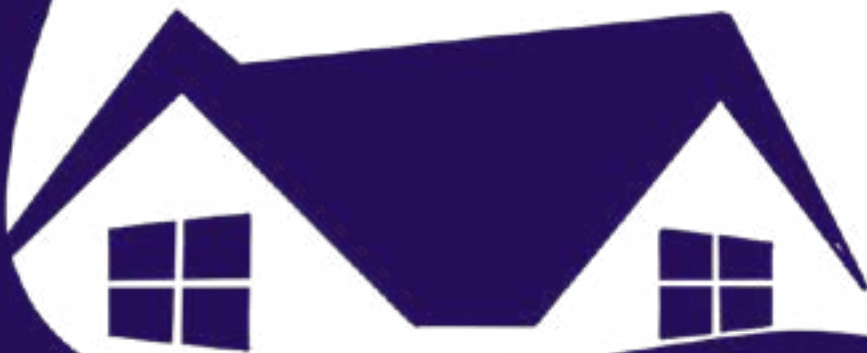
Young people with experience of CP or the YJ system are disproportionately represented amongst Australia's homeless population.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) found that 54% of care leavers experienced homelessness within four years of transitioning from OoHC.[15] Create Foundation's Post Care Survey found 34% of young people experienced homelessness in their first year out of care.[16] 3% of young people aged 15-24 years who accessed SHS were under CP orders, of which 48% were experiencing homelessness when first accessing the service.[17]

People with experience of the YJ system when they were younger are similarly at risk. Research shows that people who had involvement with the YJ system as a young person are nearly twice as likely to 'sleep rough' or 'in squats', as people who have not.[18]

Young people are often placed in YJ detention or are required to remain there due to not having a suitable address where they can live safely. This is a commonly known problem, but we were unable to find national data regarding its scale. A study by YFoundations focusing on NSW found that during 2019-20, 236 young people did not receive bail and were detained in YJ detention for this reason.[19]

The overrepresentation of young people with CP and YJ experience in the homeless population raises concerns about the support young people receive when connected with systems and the skills and capabilities imparted to support them as they transition to independence.

54%
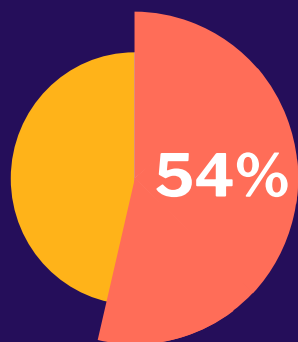
Proportion of care leavers who experienced homelessness within four years of leaving OoHC.

34%
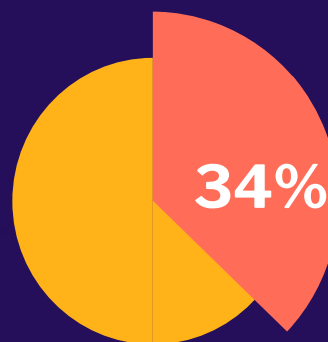
Proportion of young people who experienced homelessness in their first year post OoHC.

Listening to those who know

South Australian Case Study

Lived experience is critical in offering insights that may not have been considered previously about the intended beneficiaries of policies and services being developed. People with lived experience have a unique awareness of how policy decisions and social structures affect them and the community. Lived experience can improve research, writing and engagement in policy making processes, as well as challenge assumptions or viewpoints. To effectively measure the quality of current policies and services and shape future ones, we need these voices at the table.

State and Territory Governments have responsibility for the CP and YJ systems, and while they may share similarities, they operate under varying policies and practices. By focusing on South Australia, we are able to provide a more localised analysis of the experiences of children and young people. This may also offer insights that can be considered more broadly in ideal systems.

Our research objectives:

1. Understand and unpack where current approaches have failed or assisted young people with experience of CP and YJ systems as they transition to independent living.

2. Identify the critical components of transition support e.g., housing, vocational training, skill development, mental health transition support, support budgeting and paying bills.

3. Identify 'what good looks like' for each transition support component and conduct a gap analysis against current approaches.

South Australian Snapshot

Out of home care

As of 31 January 2022, **4,668** young people in South Australia had been placed in some form of care.[20]

Youth Justice

216 young people were under YJ supervision on an average day in South Australia in 2020–21.[23]

According to the South Australian Guardian for Children and Young People (GCYP) and Training Centre Visitor (TCV), around 20-25% of young people involved with both the YJ and OoHC[24] systems. The exact figure is unknown due to a lack of data.[25]

First Nations

First Nations young people represented **36.7%** (1,519) of the 4,136 children and young people in OoHC on 30 June 2020.

First Nations young people represented 44% of those under community-based supervision, and 54% on detention orders in 2020-21.[21]

Only 3 out of 10 are placed with First Nations families or kin.[22]

1,519
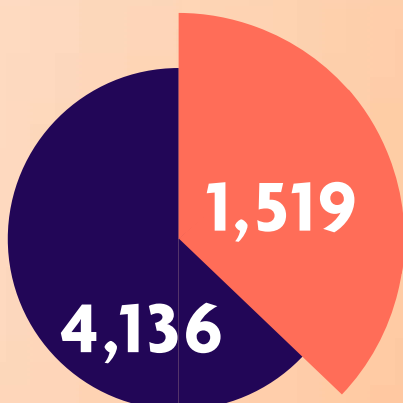
4,136

First Nations children of the 4,136 children and young people in OoHC on 30 June 2020

Listening to those who know

Many young people do not feel prepared or ready to transition on the system mandated date

Who we heard from

Throughout 2021-22, we spoke with four people who had lived experience of the CP or YJ system and homelessness, as well as six service staff who work within the systems, to identify the challenges and opportunities of young people's transition from the CP and YJ systems and understand how we can best support young people.

Of the four people with lived experience that we spoke with, one identified as First Nations, all four had experience of living in OoHC, and three had experience of YJ detention. The voices of young people presented in this section capture interviewees experiences across both the YJ and CP systems.

What we heard

Many young people do not feel prepared or ready to transition on the system mandated date.

"The first house I lost because I didn't have all the skills to pay rent on time and look after it properly."

Some young people feel scared to ask for help and felt responsible for independently managing this transition out of care.

"I guess the challenge was getting over the fear and just asking for help, and that I do not need to do or try and fix things or get through things on my own."

The absence of support and guidance offered to young people to assist them in effectively navigating the period is a critical gap in their transition from CP and YJ systems. When asked about their transition, and their preparedness, the young people consistently stated that they did not feel prepared for their transition.

"They only taught me what they thought was necessary, but it didn't help me much."

"I had to leave when I turned 18. I was never prepared. There was no preparation."

"I had to leave when I turned 18. I was never prepared. There was no preparation. I was just chucked into the big wide world and expected to know how to 'adult' properly. I would have liked better support in finding affordable, suitable living accommodation, as well as finding a job before I had moved into my first apartment."

"I had turned eighteen, and they told me to leave."

"I just had enough. I just left and called my Scout leader. There was no preparation."

"They only taught me what they thought was necessary, but it didn't help me much."

As support often ends abruptly when a young person leaves the CP system, it can significantly impact their education, connections, and interactions with their community.[26] While some young people may have access to 'after care' support, it is not always available, is a significantly reduced support offering compared with during care, and does not include case management.

These support realities are also true for young people leaving the YJ system.

A young person transitioning to independence without feeling ready or prepared can trigger and contribute to adverse outcomes, including an increased risk of homelessness. Better transition planning, accessible transitional housing, and integrated support can work together though as preventative measures.[27]

A young person not supported throughout their transition is more likely to become homeless due to a lack of service knowledge and living skills, which hinders their capacity to live independently or successfully maintain a property.

The Child Protection Systems Royal Commission found that the high rate of homelessness in young people transitioning to independence from the CP and YJ systems is likely due to them lacking the maturity and skills to live independently and in different types of group settings to when they were in care.[28]

There is a lack of knowledge and awareness of services and support available to young people to assist with young people's transition to independence

All lived experience interview participants believed that having access to support would have helped them avoid homelessness and assist with their transition, yet a typical response was that they were unaware of these services or how to access them.

One person with lived experience recounted that they **"did not know where to go when they experienced homelessness."**

They further added, I needed **"someone to call 24/7 where you can remain anonymous and ask questions, and you will be given the right guidance and support – all children should know where to go when they experience homelessness. I had no idea who to reach out to or where to go. I slept on the streets and had no choice but to go back to the foster carer. All kids should know where to go to seek help."**

Another added **"If there were programs and services readily available, I mean known about and spoken about [would have been helpful]."** the same young person suggested there should be **"advertising of the services on TV or something to show kids where they can go for help."**

Similar commentary was provided by another young person with lived experience.
"I would have liked better support in finding affordable, suitable living accommodation as well as finding a job before I had moved into my first apartment. I feel like it would have been easier if I had the correct/better support/help, and I feel like many others will benefit and be able to change their lives around if they have this."

The lack of awareness around finding appropriate support and housing is a significant concern. Without this information and navigation support, young people feel more alone when confronted with the reality of turning eighteen. Simply, they are less likely to seek help.

The lack of service and support visibility in the system for young people transitioning out of the CP and YJ systems is likely a key contributor to these young people experiencing adverse outcomes after exiting the systems. These realities contribute to adverse living outcomes and poor transitions. These are the logical and much needed calls for the campaign to raise the age, which we and the young people interviewed wholeheartedly support.[29]

"My biggest supports have been through [Org name removed]. If I didn't have [Org name removed], I don't know. [Org name removed] and my Scout leader. At first, [name removed] would just help me with housing and things, but then I got a new case manager and met this lovely lady named [name removed], and she's been wonderful. She's been able to help me through everything and support me with anything. If I didn't have my case manager, I would probably be on the streets somewhere."
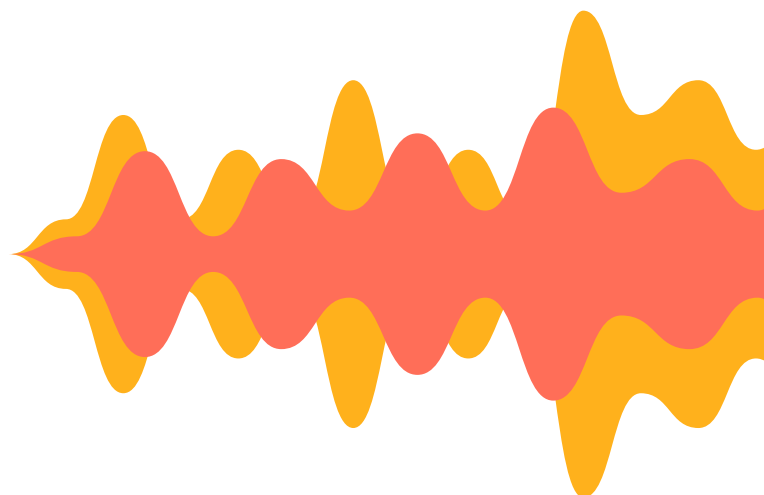
A strong relationship between young people and case managers is particularly important

"My previous carer's stepped in and let me stay with them for a while, and they helped me get set up somewhere suitable and affordable. This happened at the beginning of 2020, and since then, I have been stable, safe, happy, and able to follow my dreams."

A staff member interviewed explained that "I think having a good rapport with their main caseworker or support person [is important], and making sure that that support personal case manager is attending their house, at least once or twice a week or having that having regular phone calls, and just getting really on top. Sometimes the young person can become a little bit dependent, and that's why you need to back off after a few months just so they can start to regain their independence. But a lot of the young people I don't think have had good, well, from my experience, they haven't had too many good experiences with like their parental caregivers like maternal. They start to see you as kind of like a support slash support/maternal figure. And then that's why you need to like sort of slowly pull back to let them take some independence and always being there to support them when things go wrong."

Providing a guiding hand and supporting young people to gain independence and in control of their own lives were important protective factors enabling some young people to do better than others when transitioning from the CP and YJ systems.

"It's about building the relationship and being persistent, and coming from a place of care, where they can actually build trust because a lot of them don't have trust in services."

"I feel as though to improve transition, [young people] need to have visitation from [YJ] workers when they return to the community."

Young people leaving CP or the YJ systems commonly have few social networks that can support them during their transition, increasing the likelihood of challenges, housing insecurity and homelessness.[30] A strong and continued relationship with case managers and workers, where a young person has already built a rapport, provides a role model, support, and confidence, which can act as a preventative measure for young people at risk of homelessness.

Research suggests that strong social connections and continual, regular support may also contributes tp young people achieving "life stability".[31] It is stated that without perceived certainty of continued assistance post-transition, it is hard for young people leaving care to reach independence.

While carers and caseworkers can often play a significant role in a young person's life during their time in the CP or YJ system. These relationships often end abruptly when a person leaves these systems.
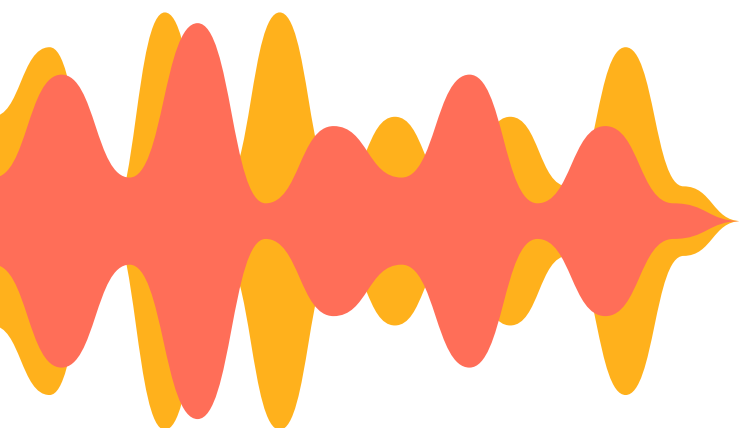
"

Sixteen to 18 year olds are frequently labelled by multiple systems and placed in the too hard basket."

The transition for young people involved with both the child protection and youth justice systems is particularly poor

Young people in care are typically required to become "independent" between the ages of 16 and 18, substantially earlier than their peers. These young people also often lack family support and face the transition without a familiar support system. SHS data shows that young people that are involved in both the CP and YJ systems and who used services between 2011 and 2015 were more likely to complete short-term or emergency housing support. With that said, they were also almost three times more likely to experience multiple episodes of homelessness and more likely to be homeless after receiving support.[32]

The high rate of homelessness after receiving support for this cohort shows that while these young people are leaning into support, the support being offered is not adequate or suitable. Short-term and emergency accommodation is not appropriate. There is an evident need for the development of additional long-term accommodation specific for young people who have exited the CP and YJ systems.

Interviews and informal conversations with staff in the CP and YJ systems about the transition for young people found that systematic barriers and negative attitudes make meeting the needs of young people that are involved with these systems is difficult.

"I work with a young person at the moment, he's 17 turning 18 in October. So he's locked up at the moment but he's, he's in care. So. his biggest, I guess concern at the moment is whether he's going to lose his house, because they'll probably terminate at some point, So

he might be turning 18 whilst in custody, and leaving custody, and not have a home. A lot of the services that he's connected with, that have so far supported him in the community, have made it clear they are going to exit him when he turns 18. So, prior to 18, you know those things were protective factors for him in the community, especially if he had Youth Justice conditions, which a lot of time he did, to continue that engagement. But he's actually been engaged with [name removed] since he was like 14, so he's built that relationship and it's voluntary and it's been good for him in a real protective factor [way]. But the fact that that's just going to pretty much stop, with no, I guess, efforts to transition into another service, or, I mean, there might have been, they might have offered it, but he'd be pretty resistant to that because he's built up that relationship. And he's one of those people that are pretty resistant to letting new people in."

"I think their transition from youth detention out into the community post 18 is one of the worst transitions I've seen in a lot of young people."

"Sixteen to 18 year olds are frequently labelled by multiple systems and placed in the too hard basket."

"I think specifically for young people under guardianship, I think that's where I probably have the most criticism...I feel like...the 16/17 year olds that are from dysfunctional families and they might be homeless...they might not have guardians around and we'd sort of have

The transition for young people involved with both the child protection and youth justice systems is particularly difficult

to work with them step by step and they might be lacking in areas, and we try to build that with the work they do try to build their living skills."

"I think sometimes more complex clients that are more challenging, there needs to be a little bit more work done, and more resources put into those because they're the ones that really are going to struggle when they don't have any support, and they drop off pretty bloody quickly once they're out of the system."

"A lot of the time they [young people in OoHC] haven't had a choice, and the decisions that are made about them, for them, like things would be done for them. So just trying to help them to build up their skills and take some ownership of their lives. Even basic things like setting up an email, it's just a lot of the time things have been taken out of our hands and done for them because I don't know if it's easier on, [I] guess it doesn't help them at the end of the day, especially when they come out, from youth justice, and they've got to have, you know, MyGov, internet banking. All of these, you got to pay bills, do all this stuff. It can be a real challenge if you've never had to do it before."

"One particular case I work with who got put on

a guardianship order pre-18. So, he would be on a guardianship post 18. But when he turned 18, he had no contact with DCP or anyone, and he's pretty much homeless now because he doesn't want to be involved with DCP, and the transition has been so, so poor."

The pilot assessment of Kurlana Tapa (Adelaide Youth Training Centre) reported similar findings, noting that support from the Department of Child Protection (DCP) is frequently withdrawn once young people enter the Training Centre. **"We don't know enough. We don't do transitions well - transitioning out. Why do they keep coming back?"**[33]

The increased risk of homelessness in young people involved with both the CP and YJ systems raises concerns around the communication between the systems and the support offered to these young people. Far too often young people are placed in short-term or emergency housing options. But what happens when the 'short-term' is up, and they are required to leave? Once support ceases, young people are left feeling alone and are again failed by the system.

"The transition point out is very challenging [for young people]. I didn't really work in the guardianship space but work with kids that are in accommodation [specifically for that cohort] - like a transition to independent living that DCP puts young people in when they're 17. So they give them like a house, and they pay rent, they get to learn all that independent living and stuff like that and then basically like they're meant to transition into long-term accommodation with HousingSA. But sometimes, what I've seen has happened, basically, they would rush them into a house. And then, their orders will expire because they're 18. And then, DCP would say, my work here is done, you're 18, you're on your own now, and then, the tenancy might go shit, and then it's sort of, you know, before their nineteenth birthday and they're on the street, and they're homeless."

> **" Transitioning from custody or long-term care leaves people feeling like everyone, and everything is expecting them to fail, and they need services and people who can change that narrative and cheer them on, build them up before they take the next step on their own."**

Future directions:
eleven components for holistic support for young people leaving the child protection and youth justice systems

Complementing and reinforcing the voices of people with lived experience of the CP and YJ systems, the Ready Transitions Team in SA undertook an environmental scan of the relevant literature to gauge current thinking and evidence on how to best support young people leaving the CP and YJ systems. The findings of this element of the work are offered as a conversation starter, a place from which key stakeholders can expand their own thinking and practice in tailored and place-based ways. A place from which stakeholders can think about systems reform and the right supporting policy environment and from where we can look collectively to drawing together the realities of lived experience with the opportunities and consequences of the service delivery and policy environments.

Reviewing the literature identified eleven components for holistic support for young people leaving the justice system and OoHC.

Potential improvements to systems from the identified components are not limited to those listed and transition planning and service design should be responsive and tailored to each young person. A young person might need support with one or all components. Transition support should be provided to young people before they transition from CP or the YJ system until they are "ready" to "disconnect" and transition to independence. A young person disconnecting and reconnecting to support should be possible and supported.

By individualising support in these eleven areas, young people will receive the practical guidance to gain emotional, physical and behavioural skills, knolwedge and awareness to transition from the CP and YJ systems more smoothly. The benefits of such supports will be seen in greater independence and confidence to move into adulthood, to return to trusted support providers when wobbles or crisis occur and a reduced risk of homelessness and it's whole of life impacts.

1. A Leaving Care Plan

2. Cultural Plan/ Connection to Culture

3. Healthy relationships

4. Housing assistance

5. Financial support and counselling

6. Education pathways

7. Employment and employment programs

8. Connection to birth family

9. Life skills development

10. Health and wellbeing

11. Affirmational guidance

"
I know how to do the basics of cleaning after myself, but when you live in your own home, there is a lot more cleaning involved and managing bills etc. I lost my first house given to me because I didn't know how to look after it properly."
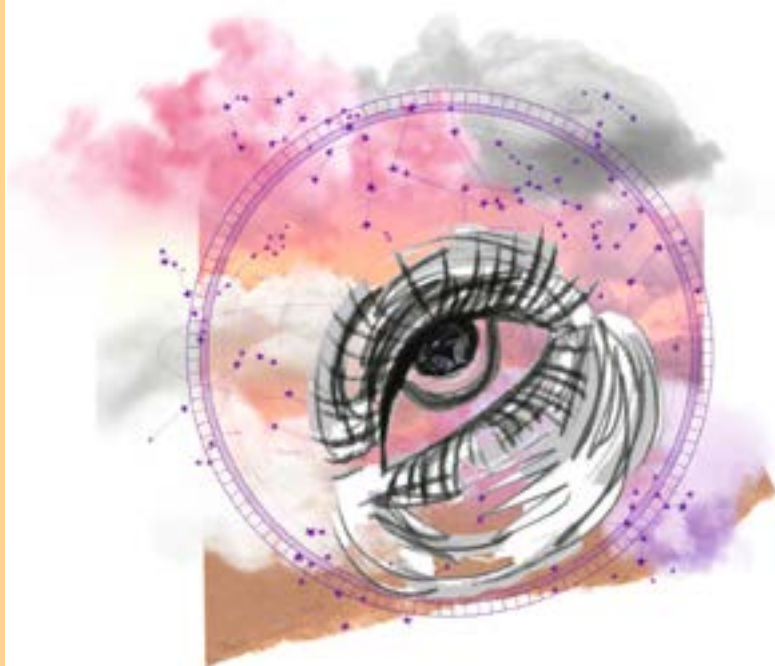
Element 1: A Leaving Care Plan

According to the *National Standards for Out-of-Home Care*, planning for leaving care should begin when a child is fifteen years old.[34] Similarly, according to the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*, South Australian young people have the right to receive the support they require to be "ready to leave care" and feel positive about their future".[35] And, according to *The Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detention Centres*, young people have the right to get help with finding somewhere safe to live and to have ongoing support once leaving the YJ system. The case for support is strong and known.[36]

To best support young people transitioning from the CP and YJ systems, transition planning should begin before young people exit the system to support them in achieving "interdependence" as preparation for "independence"[37]. Post-care support contributes to a smoother transition to independence.[38]

The people we spoke with shared the reality of their transition "planning" experiences.

"I had turned 18, and they told me to leave. I had to do it on my own. I wish that I had all the support."

It is also essential that CP, YJ, and a young person's individual support systems have consistent communication and information-sharing strategies. This is essential as communication between stakeholders, young people, and their relevant support networks enables young people to be supported based on their needs and aspirations rather than assumptions.

"I was never prepared. There was no preparation. I was just chucked into the big wide world and expected to know how to 'adult' properly. I had no help to find a job. I would have liked to have known back then about organisations designed to help young people out there, and I wish I hadn't had to deal with potentially having to live on the street after I graduated whilst I was in year 12. I was able to change my life around basically on my own! I feel like it would have been easier if I had the correct/better support/help, and I feel like many others will benefit and be able to change their lives around if they have the correct/better help/support."

Young people require individualised support for their transition based on their journeys, circumstances, and broad needs. While the support each young person requires differs, the following ten components are common support needs for young people exiting the CP and YJ system. Support with navigating different agencies and systems is also a common need of young people who access specialist homelessness services (SHS), according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's analysis on client pathways in the specialist homelessness services.

The importance of a robust, co-designed Leaving Care Plan to support young people's transition from care to adulthood was strongly evident in the interviews conducted.
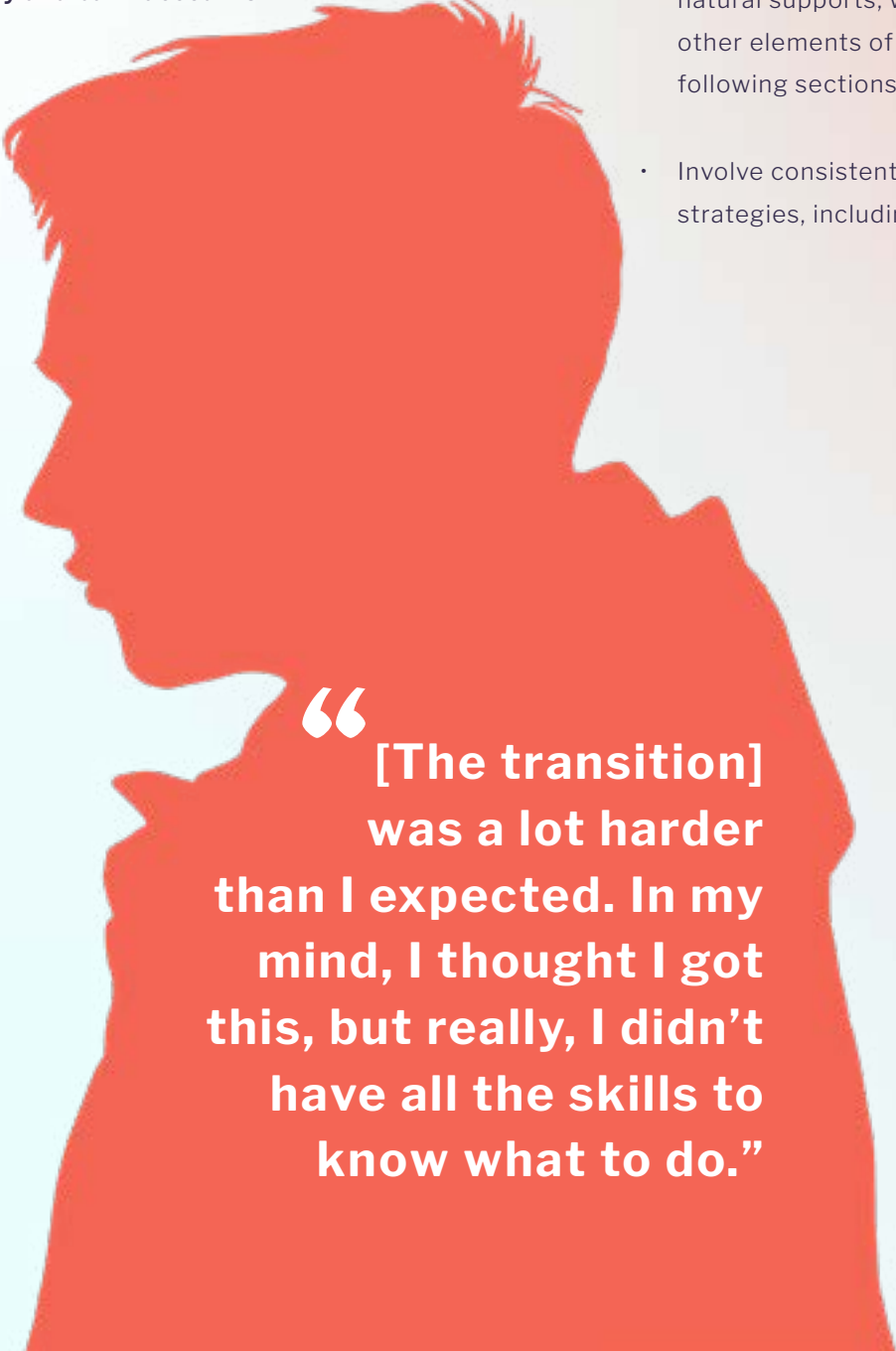
Element 1: A Leaving Care Plan

The gap and the importance of a robust and tailored leaving care plan to prepare and support young people through the transition is evident in the responses from young people interviewed.

"I just left one night and called my Scout leader, so there was no preparation. She let me have a place to stay and helped me. If it wasn't for her, I would probably be dead on the streets somewhere. When I was living with the Scout leader, she taught me about money and bank accounts."

Leaving Care Plans should:

- Be developed with/by the young person, supporting and encouraging the young person to be involved in decision-making about their lives.

- Begin when a young person is fifteen years old.

- Be tailored to a young person's needs based on their journey, their circumstances and natural supports, with consideration for the other elements of support outlined in the following sections of this report.

- Involve consistent unified communication strategies, including information sharing.

" [The transition] was a lot harder than I expected. In my mind, I thought I got this, but really, I didn't have all the skills to know what to do."

Element 2: Cultural Plan / Connection to Culture

The Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care states that young people in SA have the right to connect with their culture.[39] Additionally, the *Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detention Centres in SA* states that young people have the right to practise their religion or express their culture, participate in cultural celebrations, and consult with religious or spiritual advisors whenever possible. It also states that young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people should engage in cultural activities and celebrations with other Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.[40]

Cultural plans are essential to identify and manage the cultural needs of young people, to ensure they are immersed in their culture and to protect and support identity formation.[41] According to April Lawrie, South Australia's Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, "too often cultural identity is being lost, especially if an Aboriginal child enters care."[42] There is a current lack of "supports, programs, and community input for Aboriginal children and young people".[43]

While First Nations children and young people in care and the justice system are required to have a Cultural Plan developed, there have been significant gaps in this process.[44] Cultural Plans have often not been developed at all or developed poorly;[45] and caseworkers who do not identify as First Nations and are responsible for developing Cultural Plans may lack the depth of knowledge required to create an effective and meaningful Cultural Plan and the process to support its development.[46]

Young people's connection with culture can be supported through:

- Employing First Nations staff.[47]

- Supporting young people to learn their language and culture.

- Enabling and encouraging young people to engage in cultural activities and events.

- The development of the Cultural Plans and the processes supporting their development being supported by workers with deep cultural knowledge and in line with the needs and preferences of the young person.

- Developing and implementing consistent plans that focus on maintaining close connections with young people's community, religion, and spirituality.

Element 3: Healthy relationships

Young people in care have the right to have contact with significant people while they are in care and to continue contact with those who were important to them while they were in care once they leave care.[48] Young people in detention have the right to regular contact with friends and family.[49] It is important that young people develop and maintain positive relationships as it benefits a young person's self-esteem, identity, and emotional wellbeing,[50] contributing to a smoother transition.

The young people we interviewed also highlighted the people in their lives that made a critical difference in staying afloat in the difficult time of transition.

"Only my Nan (who is my 3rd Foster carer). She is the only one that cared enough to teach me you have to work for what you want. She pushed welfare to get stuff for me, but if she didn't, then no one would have."

"My previous carer stepped in and let me stay with them for a while, and they helped me get set up somewhere suitable and affordable."

According to the CREATE Foundation, there is a need for greater emphasis on and encouragement of young people to enhance their resources, such as strengthening relationships between peers, siblings, and partners.[51] The Commission for Children and Young People further suggest that the department, in consultation with children and young people with lived experience develop 'good-practice guidelines and training on how children and young people participate in decision-making regarding these relationships.[52]

Healthy relationships for young people transitioning from the CP and YJ systems should be supported by:

- Supporting and encouraging positive relationships in CP/YJ.

- Actively encouraging young people to have regular contact and maintain relationships once leaving care.

- Providing programs that focus on enhancing young people's personal resources.

Element 4: Housing assistance

Children and Young People in Care in SA have the right to a safe place to live when leaving care.[53] Similarly, young people in detention have the right "to get help with somewhere safe to live and ongoing support", according to the *Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detention Centres.*[54]

Young people often transition from the CP and YJ systems with limited economic and social resources to draw on, and consequently, accessing and maintaining accommodation is more difficult for these young people transitioning to adulthood.[55] Housing assistance is an important element in supporting young people's transition to independence.

The people we interviewed highlighted the challenges they faced, securing and maintaining housing:

"I would have liked better support in finding affordable, suitable living accommodation as well as finding a job before I had moved into my first apartment."

"I know how to do the basics of cleaning after myself, but when you live in your own home, there is a lot more cleaning involved and managing bills etc. I lost my first house given to me because I didn't know how to look after it properly."

Data suggests that young people who receive housing assistance through their transitioning have better outcomes in health, social connections, education, and employment,[56] as well as improved wellbeing and educational and career success.[57]

According to a study by the CREATE Foundation, young people leaving care in Australia followed either a "smooth pathway" or a "more volatile process." The smooth path was characterised by successful first-time housing placement, stability and social network support, with resources provided to assist young people with maintaining their tenancy. The more volatile path was defined by housing instability, a lack of appropriate transition planning, and young people being in vulnerable positions with little control over their housing.[58] The study demonstrates the importance of young people being involved in decision making around their accommodation, which has a direct influence on housing stability.

A stakeholder with experience working with young people in the CP and YJ systems explained the importance of housing assistance clearly:
"I've worked with people who don't have secure housing before they're 18, and they exit pretty much into homelessness. And a lot of these emergency shelters don't take many young people under guardianship. They have to wait until they're post 18."

"There has been a lot of pressure from (above) to get kids out ASAP, whether or not an appropriate placement is found. This seems to be especially the case for under 15s. When the [young person] is not happy with the accommodation that has been organised for them, in most cases, they breach or re-offend extremely quickly. For example, the amount of times that we see kids placed in the south when all of their support systems are located in the north, including school, is ridiculous."

Element 4: Housing assistance

"I think more (practical) thought needs to be going into placement decisions."

Housing support for young people exiting the CP and YJ systems may be improved if alternative approaches to supporting young people before, during and after their transition are adopted. It is essential that young people are offered flexible and consistent housing support based on their individual needs.

"I think it would be really good if there could be like a transition house or something, whether it's like individual apartments, maybe for three to six months from release before moving into it, one of our IHEP [Integrated Housing Exits Program] properties for the two-year tenancy. Just because in the first few weeks, I guess it really tests their ability to navigate the community again and say no to peer pressure. Sometimes, a lot of young people might re-offend within the first few weeks, and then if they were in one of our main houses, they would lose their tenancy, lose their furniture, lose their brokerage that they have received, which is quite upsetting for them, because they're not eligible again in the future [for] brokerage."

Due to the lack of existing housing for this cohort, there is also a need for the development of housing space/provisions for young people that is affordable, accessible, culturally appropriate, and in a location that encourages social and economic participation in a safe and nurturing environment. This process, which includes design, development, review, and evaluation, should be led by the people for whom it is intended.

Housing support for young people transitioning from out of home care and Youth Justice may be improved with practices such as:

- Increasing/removing the age of support offered to care leavers.

- Prioritising placement stability.

- Providing social network support.

- Offering ongoing support and resources for housing maintenance.

- Implementing a "no discharge policy" ending young people being placed in crisis, temporary and inappropriate accommodation.[59]

- Prioritising access to social housing.[60]

- Increasing the availability of housing options that meet the needs of young people. [61]

- Increasing financial/Centrelink support.[62]

- Supporting young people to maintain a tenancy and navigate the various systems.[63]

- Providing brokerage to assist young people to set up in their new, safe and appropriate housing.

- Support young people can find or return to when they wobble in their housing or crisis reoccurs.

Element 5: Financial support and counselling

Young people in care in South Australia have the right to get the support needed to leave care and feel good about their future, including learning the skills required to live as independently as possible, such as budgeting.[64] With that said, there is a lack of planning around financial needs during transition to independence,[65] alongside a lack of planning for young people during transition in support of obtaining financial planning.[66]

"They taught you how to budget, but it was not very practical because we couldn't handle our own money. They didn't reinforce why we had to put money aside and how much we can spend on food."

According to CREATE Foundation's 2009 post-care survey, financial support was the highest reported need to help retain accommodation for young people exiting care,[67] and financial difficulties were the second-highest negative outcome reported.[68] Furthermore, 54% of 188 young people were entirely dependent on Centrelink benefits after leaving care.[69]

The challenges around financial support were echoed in discussions we had with young people and workers. When asked about the most significant challenges adjusting to life after exiting the CP and YJ systems, one person responded simply: **"financial [issues]!"**

"Even though my family helped me find somewhere, I could not afford it. At the beginning, I didn't have a job. After a year of living there, I began to experience major financial issues and struggled to pay the bills, as it was in my relative's name, they kicked me out."

"Managing money, budgeting, dealing with like the community, dealing with supports, dealing with Centrelink." were listed as the key challenges observed by one worker interviewed.

Financial support for young people transitioning from CP and YJ systems will be improved by:

- Practical financial education and support programs, with these programs allowing young people to physically handle their money.

- Increasing Centrelink support for young people transitioning from OoHC and the YJ system.[70]

- Increasing and individualising financial support and offering it before, during and after being in CP or the YJ system.[71]

- Offering and supporting education and employment pathways.

Element Six: Education pathways

Young people in care in SA have the right to get the support needed to leave care and feel good about their future, including continuing study and training post-care.[72] Similarly, young people in detention also have the right to continue their education.[73]

Research tells us that many young people transitioning from the CP and YJ systems face considerable challenges accessing education and training, resulting in skills deficits impacting employment and other opportunities later in life.[74]

"I was also almost expelled from school in year 10. I was able to change in the following year when I moved in with a new family member. However, by the end of year 12, I was more focussed on trying not to be homeless than my education."

And, on the flipside, as expressed by one person with lived experience of the systems who had been supported with education opportunities: **"I love the independence and freedom. I also love that I can and have taken control of my own life, and I've been happy and grown as a person since. I also have the freedom to play the sports I want and study what I want."**

Workers interviewed reinforced the perspectives of young people when asked what would make a difference in young people's lives as they transition from care:
"More flexible educational opportunities, more employment opportunities, or more things for them to be able to achieve, you know? Feel a sense of accomplishment and empowerment and keep moving forward."

"The biggest protective factors would be [for] those who... [are] engaged in education."

Better education pathways can be achieved for young people exiting the CP and YJ systems through:

- Extending carer support, carers were seen as the most significant support in facilitating educational outcomes in young people.

- Encouraging and supporting education programs and training.[75]

- Enabling young people to maintain positive peer relationships.[76]

- Providing and supporting leaving care programs that offer support post-care.[77]

Element 7: Employment and employment programs

The right to continued study, training or work post-care is a right of all young people in care in South Australia.[78] Similarly, young people in detention have the right to skill based training for employment.[79]

Employment and related support are essential components of a young person's successful transition to independence. Having meaningful employment gives a person a sense of purpose, as well as earning an income. Research shows that employment can reduce offending behaviours in young people with access to pro-social influences and positive role models.[80]

While the benefits of employment and employment programs during the transition to independence are known, research shows that less than a third of young South Australian care leavers will be employed by the time they are aged 21.[81] Similarly, CREATE Foundation's post-care survey found that 30 per cent of young people interviewed struggled to find regular employment,[82] and while 30 per cent expressed difficulties in obtaining employment, only 20 per cent received assistance.[83]

"I had no help to find a job; I had found one after I had moved into the apartment. I would have liked better support in finding a job before moving into my first apartment."

The lack of support in obtaining employment and learning the necessary skills to keep a job prior to exiting the system is likely to contribute significantly to the employment challenges young people face later in life. People with a history of involvement with the YJ system face additional barriers to employment because of a 'criminal' record.

One worker involved in the system noted the need for some of the same supports that already exist for adults leaving prisons:

"The introduction of a job-finding program for the 16+ year olds [would be beneficial to young people], similar to what some of the adult prisons offer, where residents who are coming to the end of their detention order have a chance to apply for jobs so that they have a job to go to when they walk out."

Improved employment outcomes can be achieved for young people transitioning from the CP and YJ systems through:

- Extending carer support i.e. support from significant adults, including carers, mentors, youth workers, potential employers, and work colleagues, such support is critical in helping young people navigate the working world.[84]

- Encouraging and supporting employment and employment programs, as young people participating in leaving care programs tend to achieve better employment outcomes.[85]

- Individualising support provided.

- Providing, supporting and promoting work experience and employment opportunities to young people whilst in care or detention and during their transition from care or detention. Previous work experience and employment opportunities increase the employment pathways that young people can pursue post-care.[86]

- Partnering with local businesses and training providers.[87]

Element 8: Connection to birth family

Connection with birth family is essential for young people's development and identity.[88] Young people in detention have the right to regular contact with family through regular visits and phone calls and regular contact with family.[89] Young people in care also have the right to regular contact with family and have the right to information about their families and the reasons they were placed in care.[90]

While strong relationships and connections with family, where appropriate, are recognised as beneficial for a young person's development and wellbeing, there is no consistent and unified practice to record in the care plan or gather information on the contact between children and young people and their families.[91] CREATE Foundation work highlights the continued lack of planning around support for family contact for young people during the transition out of care.[92]

Family connections was also a topic raised in the interviews we conducted.

"I see young people do a lot better when they still got connections with their family... When they're not so isolated... Those young people that have that support system in place, whether that be, family, friends."

"If I was able to live with my aunty, because it was discussed, and she seemed open to it [that would have helped]."

In contrast (and showing the importance of tailored support), one interviewee expressed In contrast, and showing the importance of young person-centred planning and support, one person noted: **"I felt most comfortable and happy in my home when I started living in the city and cut off all family ties."**

Strategies to support young people transitioning from the CP and YJ systems in connecting with their families include:

- Developing a consistent and unified practice to record family contact in the leaving care plan and record information.

- Encouraging and supporting connection and contact with family before leaving care and after leaving (where appropriate).

- Placing young people in care and detention with their birth family (where appropriate and possible).

- Using a reunification approach where appropriate, such as Safe & Connected Youth Program;[93] Ruby's Reunification Program).[94]

Element 9: Life skills development

"The biggest thing [challenge] for me was remembering to eat."

Young people in care in South Australia have the right to get the support needed so they are 'ready' to leave care and feel good about their future. Such support needs to enable young people to learn the skills they need to live independently, such as driving, budgeting, cooking and using public transport.[95]

Life skills development is essential for a young person's successful transition to independence; these skills enable a young person to live independently and contribute to future wellbeing, academic achievement, career success and satisfaction.[96]

Transition support for young people needs to gradually impart practical skills while engaging young people actively. Preparation for young people exiting CP and YJ systems should be holistic, focusing on developing skills such as hygiene, diet, budgeting, shopping, cooking, education, and personal, familial, and cultural identity.[97] Life skill development should be responsive and tailored to the young person.[98]

As one person noted: **"They only taught me what they thought was necessary, but it didn't help me much, it was not very practical."**

A worker added further nuance: **"I think some standardisation of the necessary independent living skills curriculum would be useful. This would ensure all young people are provided with the same training and skills basis to support their transition. NFP providers and the government would need to provide evidence of young people's ability to put these skills into** practice, and this, along with other criteria, could form part of their assessment as ready (or not) to transition out of care."

Life skill development through "Positive Youth Development", where young people can learn the necessary life skills to deal with the challenges they may face,[99] is regarded as critical for young people transitioning back into the community particularly from YJ detention.[100] It is also suggested that life skill development through the growth of leadership skills and teamwork will assist young people during the transition to independence.[101]

An interviewee with experience working in the systems commented, **"one of the biggest challenges [I have observed for young people adjusting to life after OoHC/YJ] is a lack of independent living skills."**

Others also observed **"Access to more independent living skills programs whilst they are at the centre [would improve transition support]."**

"[The transition from the CP and the YJ systems] could be made better by preparing to transition youth earlier by teaching them basic independent living skills around what it takes to living in a house, budgeting your money to what bills you have to pay, what you can save and what you can spend so you can survive week to week. Cooking skills. Making sure they have a job or some kind of study lined up, supports in place like a mentor to help guide them through

Element 9: Life skills development

the lived experience and struggles they may encounter so they can call back on them if they feel they are failing in any of these areas."

"I think there also needs to be a link between DCP and the NDIS to ensure for those young people who will not be able to transition to independence there is appropriate support for the long-term."

Similarly, the CREATE Foundation notes that a key concern expressed by the young people interviewed for their 2009 post-care survey is a lack of planning of life skills support for young people during transition.[102] The report emphasises the need for focused assistance with independent living skills for care leavers and those in care to prepare them for adulthood.[103]

Young people transitioning from the CP and YJ systems can better be enabled to develop life skills through:

- Practical budgeting and financial education and support.

- Cooking and cleaning education and support.

- Education and employment planning and support.

- The use of a "Positive Youth Development" approach.

- The development of leadership skills.

- Encouraging participation in activities that require teamwork.

- Flexible, responsive and tailored programs.

" The biggest thing [challenge] for me was remembering to eat"

Element 10: Health and wellbeing

According to the *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*, young people have the right to receive health care when needed, to access a counsellor or mental health support, and to receive specialist care if they have a disability.[104] Similarly, young people detained in detention centres in South Australia have the right to "proper" health care and mental health support when required; young people who are "vulnerable or have special needs" have the right to "special care and protection".[105]

Physical and mental health problems are common amongst young people in the CP and YJ systems.[106] A lack of transition planning negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of young people when transitioning to independence.[107]

To improve the health and wellbeing of young people transitioning, investment in specialist after-care support services should be increased,[108] and the cost of health services for young people with experience of the CP and YJ system should be eliminated, or at least significantly reduced.[109] Post-care program engagement may also contribute to better health and wellbeing in young people.[110]

The links between a challenging transition, a lack of support offered to young people, and the impact on a person's health and wellbeing were raised by interviewees:
"**Mental health [was one of the biggest challenges in adjusting to life after leaving OoHC]- I didn't feel good, felt very alone.**"

"The challenge now is my mental health." another reflected.

The health and wellbeing of young people transitioning from the CP and YJ systems should be supported by:

- Boosting investment in specialist after-care support services.

- Providing, supporting and encouraging after-care programs and support.

- Eliminating or significantly reducing the costs for young people associated with specialist health and wellbeing services such as mental health services for young people leaving care.

Element 11: Affirmational guidance

According to t*he Charter of Rights for Young People in care in South Australia*, young people have the right to "feel good about themselves and who they are" and feel "valued"[111]

Affirmational guidance and support can strengthen a young person's esteem and sense of value. Affirmations have the ability to shift a young person's mindset, improve self-esteem,[112] remain positive in the face of threats,[113] and assist young people in making more informed choices and self-evaluating.[114]

According to the CREATE foundation, four levels of support should be provided to young people transitioning to independence: practical support, emotional support, affirmational guidance and support, and participation support.[115]

It is vital that young people feel encouraged, affirmed, and supported as they grow and transition to independence.[116] Affirming a young person's entire identity is critical, but it can be difficult. Young people often have numerous interconnected identities; initiatives must address all aspects of their being to be effective.[117] The more affirmations are used, the more easily they can be remembered, and the more likely they become habitual.[118]

An example of where affirmational guidance has seen results is at Edmund Rice Camps, which supports vulnerable and marginalised children. They reported "amazing outcomes" from their most recent "family camp", "with children opening up to foster carers for the first time, thanks to families working together and providing peer-to-peer support and affirmation".[119]

While affirmational guidance and support are recognised as key components for successful transitions, there is a lack of consistent affirmational guidance and support for young people. [120]

Practices to improve affirmational guidance and support offered to young people transitioning from the CP and the YJ systems include:

- Making environmental changes e.g. visible signs of welcome and affirmation, images that give young people a sense that they are welcomed and valued. Such environmental changes should be co-designed by young people.[121]

- Workers must be trained in principles of good customer/client service, including how people should be greeted and welcomed as they enter an environment, as feeling welcome is an important way to start the transitional support experience for young people.[122]

- Updating the website to show that all young people will be accepted, welcomed and affirmed.[123]

- Using and encouraging affirmational phrases.

Call to Action

The number of young people who have a history of involvement with the CP and YJ systems that experience homelessness is a major concern. Despite the standards and rights that current approaches have in place to protect young people, the findings of this report reveal that many young people do not feel supported or ready to leave the CP and YJ systems. We further discovered the absence of a systemic understanding of the challenges and good practice mechanisms that support young people transitioning to life post involvement with the CP and YJ systems.

It is essential that lived expertise is elevated, listened to and acted upon to respond to the systemic barriers that contribute to unnecessarily challenging transitions and the unacceptable high and real risk of homelessness. Our collective responsibility is to make the changes to ensure people are supported to thrive in adulthood.

" I love the independence and freedom. I also love that I can and have taken control of my own life, and I've been happy and grown as a person since. I also have the freedom to play the sports I want and study what I want."

Contributors

This report was compiled by Lorna Robinson, Rose O'Shanassay & Sophia Serafin.

It incorporates the work and contributions from members of the Constellation Project's 'Ready Transitions' and 'In My Home' teams:

- **Alexandra Joseph,** Department for Correctional Services SA
- **Bella Graczyk,** University of New South Wales
- **Chloe Hampton,** Amazon AWS
- **Emily Duivesteyn,** Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
- **Erin Hannan-Jones,** PwC Australia
- **Ian Cox,** Office for Homelessness Sector Integration
- **Kaitlyne Bowden,** Berry Street
- **Kate Holland,** Australian Red Cross
- **Kirsten Sandstrom,** Service to Youth Council
- **Lorna Robinson,** The Constellation Project
- **Maithili Mishra,** Minter Ellison
- **Marielle Intveld,** Australian Red Cross Youth Advisory Committee
- **Melanie Sharpe,** PwC Australia
- **Melissa Harvey,** Minter Ellison
- **Michael Steven,** Service to Youth Council
- **Neridah McDonald,** University of New South Wales
- **Rearna Hawkins,** Youth Inc
- **Riley McCullough,** Australian Red Cross
- **Rose Lacoon Williamson,** Youth Inc
- **Rose O'Shanassy,** University of Technology Sydney
- **Sabina Bertuzzi,** PwC Australia
- **Sarah Bishop,** Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre
- **Sarah Strathearn,** Australian Red Cross
- **Sheryl Boniface,** Service to Youth Council
- **Sophia Serafin,** University of Technology Sydney
-

We would also like to thank those who assisted in reviewing the report, including **Andrew Kos** from Mission Australia, **Selina Tually** from Centre for Social Impact (CSI) Flinders and **Sarah Strarthearn** from Australian Red Cross.

About the Constellation Project

The Constellation Project

The Constellation Project is a non-profit organisation founded in 2018 by PwC, Mission Australia, the Centre for Social Impact and the Australian Red Cross, with a vision to end homelessness through cross-sector collaboration and the development of practical solutions. The Project incorporates voices and knowledge from various sectors and backgrounds and emphasises First Nations and lived experience voices and perspectives.

Special thanks to **Davina Dressler** from the Constellation for support with the Better Journeys project and the production of this report.

Better Journeys

The Better Journeys work is dedicated to generating solutions and creating pathways for young people exiting custody and OoHC to avoid experiencing homelessness or to exit homelessness quickly. The Better Journeys Social Lab consists of three small teams working on three solutions using South Australia as proving ground for change. The teams were given a challenge question at the project's kick-off event, which was developed by an expert steering group, to provide clarity to the teams and encourage creative thinking.

The
Constellation
Project

The Constellation Project

Artist interpretations

Beauty in darkness

This piece is titled 'Beauty in darkness'. It is from the perspective of what it means to be safe in your own home, the idea that you're not only able to grow but thrive. It is about acknowledging the darkness and the things that can come out of it, certain flowers only grow and bloom in the moonlight.

Couch Surfing

This is about couch surfing, the greenery is gratitude for having something, the couch position in the sky with clouds is an imagination for a better

This is more about how people, (often well meaning people in your life) put you in a box and judge you when and if you are honest about your living situation. The wilted flower represents the pain of the judgement. The top of the box with light represent the dream of something different and the beauty of those willing to help.

Beauty in darkness

Eyes are really important, they are our windows to the soul, they can tell you a lot about who people are and what they are going through and are often reflections of our situations. If you look closely there is a reflection of the reality of homelessness. I also wanted to show a hopelessness so I decided to have that same looking up to the stars, hoping, wanting, even dreaming of a solution or a different reality

This image is about how hard it is when you have no place to call home. Couch surfing is sometimes the safest and only option but the reality is hard. I cut out the silhouette to show the emptiness and longing to have somewhere safe to rest and longing for somewhere to be my safe place permanently.

Definitions

Care and protection orders: Legal orders or arrangements where child protection departments are responsible for a child's welfare.[124]

Community order: a legal arrangement where a young person is under youth justice supervision within the community. It may be unsentenced or sentenced. Unsentenced orders (e.g., various forms of bail) sentenced orders (e.g., good behaviour bonds, suspended detention, and parole or conditional release).[125]

Custody order: (see detention order)

Detention: A legal arrangement requiring a young person to be detained in a youth justice facility (sentenced and unsentenced)[126]

Detention centre: A place where young people are detained while under supervision administered and operated by a youth justice agency. [127]

Detention order: An order A sentence where a young person is to be detained in a youth justice facility. [128]

Department for Child Protection (DCP): The administrative unit of the public service specified by the Minister "to protect children and young people from harm" and "provide for children and young people who are in care", amongst other purposes.

Lived experience: "The knowledge and understanding a person receives when they have lived through an experience."[129]

Lived expertise: "The knowledge, insights, understanding and wisdom gathered through lived experience."[130]

Out of home care (OoHC): Overnight care for children, where there is ongoing case management and financial payment offered.[131]

Person with lived experience: This report refers to a person/people with lived experience as a person/people with experience of the youth justice system or child protection system and homelessness.

Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS): "Support provided by a specialist homelessness service aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. Includes accommodation provision, assistance to sustain housing, domestic/family violence services, mental health services, family/relationship assistance, disability services, drug/alcohol counselling, legal/financial services, immigration/cultural services, other specialist services and general assistance and support." [132]

Transition plan: The planned actions to support a young person to transition to independence from the child protection and youth justice systems.

Youth Justice supervision: Any form of sentenced or unsentenced youth justice supervision (community-based or detention).[133]

Youth Justice System (YJ system): The processes and practices for managing children and young people who have committed, or allegedly committed, an offence.[134]

The age of criminal responsibility: "the age in which a child is considered by law to have understood that their actions were wrong and can face criminal charges." The age of criminal responsibility is currently 10 across all Australian states.[135]

Endnotes

1   Centre for Social Impact, *Preventing homelessness after release from youth justice detention: Reflections on planning a participatory, lived experience and trauma-informed project* (Centre for Social Impact, UNSW, 2021).

2   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Vulnerable young people: interactions across homelessness, youth justice and child protection* (AIHW: Canberra, 2016), 64.

3   AIHW, Child protection Australia (AIHW: Canberra, 2022), 3.

4   Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard, M., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., and Bailey, N., *Pathways from out-of-home care*, AHURI Final Report No. 147 (AHURI: Melbourne, 2010).

5   Conroy, E and Williams, M., *Homelessness at transition: An Evidence Check rapid review brokered* by the Sax Institute for the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and FACSIAR (2017), 55. AIHW, Child protection (2022), 55.

6   AIHW, *Youth justice in Australia* (AIHW: Canberra, 2021), 55

7   Child and Family Focus SA. Election Policy Position, *Transition from Care position paper: Raise the Leaving Care Age to 21* (Child and Family Focus SA, 2022)

8   Deloitte Access Economics. 2018. *A federal and state cost benefit analysis: Extending care to 21 years* (Deloitte 2018) as quoted in Child and Family Focus SA. Election Policy Position, *Transition from Care position paper: Raise the Leaving Care Age to 21* (Child and Family Focus SA, 2022)

9   AIHW, Youth justice in Australia (AIHW: Canberra, 2021), 26

10   AIHW, Youth justice (2021), 27

11   AIHW, Youth justice (2021), 25.

12   Raise The Age, *Why we need to raise the age*, (#Raise the age campaign, 2022, accessed 3 November 2022)

13   Meikle, I. *"First steps to lifting age of criminal responsibility."* (City News, 2022, accessed 3 Novemeber 2022).

14   ACT Government, 2021, *Raising the age report* (ACT Government, 2022, accessed 3 November 2022).

15   Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, *Poor transition processes are driving young care leavers into homelessness: report* (AHURI: Melbourne, 2021).

16   McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 5.

17   AIHW, Specialist homelessness services annual report 2020-21 (AIHW: Canberra, 2021), 97.

18   Bevitt et al. (2015), as cited in AIHW, Specialist homelessness services (2021), 93.

19   Yfoundations, Young, in trouble and with nowhere to go: Homeless adolescent's pathways into and out of detention in NSW (Yfoundations 2021),5.

20   Department for Child Protection. 2022. Reporting and Statistics. (Government of South Australia 2022) retrieved at: <https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/department/reporting-and-statistics>

21   AIHW, Youth justice in Australia (AIHW: Canberra, 2021), factsheet retrieved at:. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/juv/138/youth-justice-in-australia-2020-21/contents/factsheets/sa

22   Guardian for Children and Young People & Training Centre Visitor. (2019). A Perfect Storm? Dual status children and young people in South Australia's child protection and youth justice systems - Report 1, p. 7. https://gcyp.sa.gov.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Dual-Status-CYP-in-SA-A-Perfect-Storm.pdf

23   Guardian for Children and Young People & Training Centre Visitor. (2019). A Perfect Storm? Dual status children and young people in South Australia's child protection and youth justice systems - Report 1, p. 7. https://gcyp.sa.gov.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Dual-Status-CYP-in-SA-A-Perfect-Storm.pdf

24   (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022). Youth justice in Australia 2020–21. https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/juv/138/youth-justice-in-australia-2020-21/contents/factsheets/sa

25   Dornin, T. (2022, July 1). Inquiry into Indigenous children in care. 7 News. https://7news.com.au/news/public-health/inquiry-into-indigenous-children-in-care-c-7369574

26   Yfoundations. 2021, Annual report (Yfoundations 2020/2021),14

27   McFarlane, K. 'Care-criminalisation: The involvement of children in out-of-home care in the NSW criminal justice system.' Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology, vol. 51, no. 3,412-433.

28   Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, The life they deserve: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report, (Government of South Australia, 2016),384

29   Maunders et al. (1999), as cited in Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, (2010),27.

30   Conroy, E and Williams, M., Homelessness at transition: An Evidence Check rapid review brokered by the Sax Institute for the NSW (Department of Family and Community Services and FACSIAR 2017),55.

Element 1: A Leaving Care Plan

31   Muir et al. 2019, as cited in McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 3

32   McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),30.

33   Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*.

34   Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). *Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres* (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia)

35   Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs & National Framework Implementation Working Group, Transitioning from out of home care to independence: *A national priority under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* (2009 - 2020) 17

36   Montgomery et al. 2006, 1437, as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard, M., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., and Bailey, N., *Pathways from out-of-home care, AHURI Final Report No. 147* (AHURI: Melbourne, 2010).

37 Wang et al. 2019, as cited in *Specialist homelessness services client pathways: analysis insights* (AIHW, 2022)

38 Mackenzie et al. 2020; Gaetz et al. 2018; Wang et al. 2019, as cited in *Specialist homelessness services client pathways: analysis insights* (AIHW 2022)

Element Two: Cultural Plan/Connection to culture

39 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care.

40 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia

41 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 207.

42 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 42.

43 Commission for Children and Young People, 'In our own words': Systemic inquiry into the lived experience of children and young people in the Victorian out-of-home care system (Melbourne: Commission for Children and Young People, 2019),269.

44 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care..

45 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia)

46 Government of South Australia 2020),

47 Monash University, 2020, p. .

Element Three: Healthy relationships

48 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care

49 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia)

50 McDowall, J. (2008, p. 50) as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. et al. (2010) Pathways from out-of-home care, AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010),202.

51 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 42

52 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 42.

Element Four: Housing assistance

53 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care.

54 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia)

55 McDowall, J. (2008, p. 50) as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. et al. (2010) Pathways from out-of-home care, AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010),2.

56 Cashmore & Paxman (2006b), as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. (2010). Pathways from out-of-home care, AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010),8.

57 Wade & Dixon (2006). as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. (2010). Pathways from out-of-home care, AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010),8

58 Natalier & Johnson, 2012, as cited in McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),66.

59 Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. (2010). Pathways from out-of-home care, AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010), 5

60 Beauchamp as cited in McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),66

61 Beauchamp as cited in McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),66

62 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),42

63 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),42

Five: Financial support and counciling

64 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care

65 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Sydney, 2020), 5.

66 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Sydney, 2020), 31

67 McDowall, J. J., Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence (CREATE Foundation: Sydney, 2020), 63

68 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Sydney, 2020), 38

69 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Sydney, 2020), 5

70 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation:

Adelaide, 2020), 44.

71 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 44

Six: Education Pathways

72 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*

73 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia

74 Frederick & Goddard 2006; Mendes 2005; Mendes 2009; Mendes, Moslehuddin & Goddard 2008 as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. (2010). *Pathways from out-of-home care,* AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010),8.

75 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 24

76 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 24

77 Scannapieco, Schagrin & Scannapieco 1995, as cited in as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. (2010). *Pathways from out-of-home care,* AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010),14.

Seven: Employment and Employment Programs

78 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*

79 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia

80 Oswald, R., J *'The impact of employment upon young offenders' identities',* The Howard Jurnal of Crime and Justice Vol. 61, No.2, (The Howard Journal of Crime and Justice, 2022), 12.

81 Department for Child Protection 2020: 17, *Investing in their future: Supporting children and young people in care to access across government services.* (Government of South Australia, 2020)17

82 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 67

83 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 17

84 Arnau-Sabatés & Gilligan, 2015; Bilson et al., 2011; Gilligan & Arnau- Sabatés, 2017; Marion et al., 2017 as cited in McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 67

85 Lindsey & Ahmed 1999, as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., & Bailey N. (2010). *Pathways from out-of-home care,* AHURI Final Report No.147. (AHURI, 2010),14.

86 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 67

87 Department for Correctional Services 2020, *Reducing Reoffending - 10% by 2020* Strategic Policy Panel Report. (Government of South Australia, 2020,)46.

Eight: Connection to Birth Family

88 Commission for Children and Young People, *annual report 2019-2020* (Commission for Chilren and Young people, Melbourne, 2019),204.

87 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*

90 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). *Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres* (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People)

91 *Commission for Children and Young People, annual report 2019-2020* (Commission for Chilren and Young people, Melbourne, 2019),205

92 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020), 31

93 Conflict Resliution Service. (n.d.). Safe & Connected Youth Program. (ACT Government).

94 Uniting Communities. (n.d.). Ruby's Reunification Program

Nine: Life Skills Development

95 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). *Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care*

96 Ridder, Lensvelt-Mulders, Hinkemeyer, Stok, & Baumeister, 2012; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004, as cited in Hermens et al., 2017: 408)

97 Mendes, P., Johnson, G., Moslehuddin, B. 2011 Effectively preparing young people to transition from out-of-home (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011)

98 Dixon and Stein, 2005, as cited in *Effectively preparing young people to transition from out-of-home* (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2011).

99 Damon, W, *What is Positive Youth Development?* 2004, The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 591, No. 1, (The American Academy of Social Science, 2002)..

100 Martins, A., R., Vella, S., & Santos, F. *Mental Health, Sport, and Positive Youth Development in Prison Systems: How Can We Move Research and Practice Forward?* 2021, Frontiers in Psychology. Vol. 12. (Frontiers in Psychology, 2021)

101 St John's Youth Service, (Adelaide 2021)

102 McDowall, J. J., *Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence* (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),57

103 McDowall, J. J., _Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence_ (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),60

Health and Wellbeing
104 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). _Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care._
105 Training Centre Visitor. (n.d.). _Charter of Rights for Youths Detained in Detenton Centres_ (office of the Guardian for Children and Young People
106 Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, _The life they deserve: Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report, Volume 1: Summary and Report,_ (Government of South Australia, 2016.)
107 McDowall, J. J., _Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence_ (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),57
108 Beachamp as cited in McDowall, J. J., _Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence_ (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),3
109 McDowall, J. J., _Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence_ (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),25
110 Lemon, Hines & Merdinger 2005, as cited in Johnson, G., Natalier, K., Mendes, P., Liddiard, M., Thoresen, S., Hollows, A., and Bailey, N., _Pathways from out-of-home care,_ AHURI Final Report No. 147 (AHURI: Melbourne, 2010). https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/147

Eleven: Affirmation Guidance and Support
111 Guardian for Children and Young People. (n.d.). _Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care_
112 Davis, T. (Psychology Today 2021). _A Guide to Affirmations and How to Use Them_
113 Critcher, Dunning, & Armor, 2010, as cited in Davis, T. (Psychology Today 2021). _A Guide to Affirmations and How to Use Them_
114 McDowall, J. J., _Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence_ (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),63
115 Paulsen & Berg, 2016, as cited in McDowall, J. J., _Transitioning to Adulthood from Out-of-Home Care: Independence or Interdependence_ (CREATE Foundation: Adelaide, 2020),63
116 Weber, Kristen and Bettencourt, Bill. "_Welcoming, Affirming, Supporting: Child Welfare Systems Must Honor the WHOLE Child."_ (Center for the Study of Social Policy, May 2021)
117 Weber, Kristen and Bettencourt, Bill. "_Welcoming, Affirming, Supporting: Child Welfare Systems Must Honor the WHOLE Child."_ (Center for the Study of Social Policy, May 202
118 Davis, T. (Psychology Today 2021). _A Guide to Affirmations and How to Use Them_
119 Bugden, P. 2020. _Vulnerable children in out-of-home care receive post-pandemic support on family camp._ (The Catholic Leader May 2020)
120 Commission for Children and Young People, annual report 2019-2020 (Commission for Chilren and Young people, Melbourne, 2019),187.
121 Weber, Kristen and Bettencourt, Bill. "_Welcoming, Affirming, Supporting: Child Welfare Systems Must Honor the WHOLE Child."_ (Center for the Study of Social Policy, May 2021)18.
122 Weber, Kristen and Bettencourt, Bill. "_Welcoming, Affirming, Supporting: Child Welfare Systems Must Honor the WHOLE Child."_ (Center for the Study of Social Policy, May 2021),18.
123 Weber, Kristen and Bettencourt, Bill. "_Welcoming, Affirming, Supporting: Child Welfare Systems Must Honor the WHOLE Child."_ (Center for the Study of Social Policy, May 2021),18.

Definitions
124 AIHW, Child Protection glossary, (AIHW, Canberra, 2022)
125 AIHW, _Youth Justice glossary_ (AIHW, Canberra, 2022)
126 AIHW, _Youth Justice glossary_ (AIHW, Canberra, 2022)
127 AIHW, _Youth Justice glossary_ (AIHW, Canberra, 2022)
128 AIHW, Child Protection glossary, (AIHW, Canberra, 2022)
129 Centre for Social Impact, _Preventing homelessness after release from youth justice detention: Reflections on planning a participatory, lived experience and trauma-informed project_ (Centre for Social Impact, UNSW, 2021), 7.
130 Centre for Social Impact, _Preventing homelessness after release from youth justice detention: Reflections on planning a participatory, lived experience and trauma-informed project_ (Centre for Social Impact, UNSW, 2021), 7.
131 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-welfare-services/child-protection/glossary#oohc
132 https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/australias-health/australias-health-snapshots/glossary
133 AIHW, _Youth Justice glossary_ (AIHW, Canberra, 2022)
134 AIHW, _Youth Justice glossary_ (AIHW, Canberra, 2022)
135 Amnesty International Australia, Why We Need to Raise the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility, Amnesty International, 2022 accessed 3 November 2022,

Method

Ready Transitions' focus is to build a body of Lived Experience insights to communicate and bring their case for change to life. The study has been carried out using a mixed-method approach, using inductive thematic analysis. The team decided on a mixed-method design for the study due to its benefits. The results obtained through combining different methods can enrich and improve our understanding of the phenomena under study and foster fresh ideas about them.

Data Collection

Desktop Research

Ready Transitions conducted a literature review to identify gaps in knowledge and evaluate trends concerning young people's transition from the CP and YJ systems. In preparation for interviewing the subject experts (young people who have experience of OoHC or YJ and have experienced homelessness), the team then developed two discussion guides: (1) for young people with lived experience of YJ or OoHC and experiences of homelessness (Appendix A); (2) for staff in these systems (Appendix B). The questions were based on the insights gained from desktop research and further informed by expert and lived experience knowledge.

Lived Experience

Four people with lived experience in OoHC or YJ and homelessness were invited to participate in the survey through the team's local networks. The purpose of the lived experience interviews was to learn about the participant's transition out of care/custody, what worked to help them feel supported and what didn't, and to gain their perspective of what 'good looks like'. Interview participants were given the option to be interviewed in person, over the phone, or through an online video conferencing platform. All lived experience participants opted to be interviewed online. Four screening questions were used to guarantee that the right participants were selected and that our interviews were diverse (Appendix C). Ten open-ended questions were then asked to the interviewees. The interviewer ensured the use of plain language where possible and used the language the person being interviewed used. The interviews were conducted using a participative approach because of the unique benefits of interviewing participants by an interviewer who has shared experiences/knowledge with the person being interviewed.

	Age	First Nations	OoHC	Youth Justice
Young person 1	20	x	✓	✓
Young person 2	20	x	✓	x
Young person 3	18	x	✓	✓
Young person 4	24	✓	✓	✓

Method

Staff Interviews and Informal Conversations

Six staff working in the OoHC and YJ space were recruited through the team's local networks and invited to participate in informal and semi-structured interviews (four unstructured and two semi-structured interviews). Interviewees had the choice to be interviewed in person, over the phone, or by email/messaging through direct message. All staff opted to continue direct messaging to complete the conversation/interview. The informal conversations consisted of broad, open-ended questions aimed at determining the strengths and weaknesses of young people's transition from institutional facilities from the perspective of staff that work in the systems. The interviews with staff followed the discussion guide, with three screening questions and seven open-ended questions

Data Analysis

Findings were analysed using a thematic analysis approach, with themes extracted through an inductive method where themes are determined by the interview data rather than having predefined ideas (deductive). The interview data was first familiarised by re-reading the transcripts and taking notes. The data was then analysed by multiple team members with various backgrounds (i.e., research, lived experience) who interpreted codes within the data. Individual findings were then compared, contrasted, and discussed within the team. Individual members revisited the codes, generating themes based on patterns within the data. Key insights are discussed in the following section.

	Role	Years of Experience	Professional experience	Professional experience (OoHC
Interview 1	Integrated housing exits program (IHEP)/ YJ Case Manager	**5 years/ 2 years in current role**	Yes	Yes
Interview 2	Qualified SW, IHEP &FLO Case Manager	**9 years/ 2.5 years in current role**	Yes	Yes

Discussion Guide: Young people

Principles	• Use plain language where possible, use the language the person you are speaking to uses. • Speaking to us is completely optional and they can stop at any time. • Do no additional harm. • Ask permission before making any notes on paper or using an app (e.g., Otter).
In screening capture	• Age • Experience of YJ • Experience of OoHC • Do they identify as a First Nations person?

Structure	Question
Opening	We are researching young people's experiences leaving youth justice and out of home care and transitioning to adult life. This research will be used to design better ways of supporting young people adjusting to life after out of home care or youth justice. We would like to talk to you about your experience. Your identity will be protected and any details you share will be anonymised. Any information collected will be used for research purposes only. **Is it okay for us to make notes of this conversation using a voice to text app?** This is just so we can recall the information you share accurately. This decision is up to you and you can say no.
Screener Questions	1. Have you experienced the out of home care system (e.g. relative/kinship care, foster care, residential care), youth justice system (e.g. youth detention) when you were younger? 2. Where did you live when you stopped living in (OoHC/YJ)? 3. Can you recall at what point after leaving (OoHC/YJ) that you felt comfortable and happy in your home?

Questions	1. Tell me what it was like for you when you left (OoHC/YJ)
	Prompt question: Where did you stay?
	
	2. What were the things that led to you ("experience homelessness'- use their words for experiencing homelessness e.g. sleeping at a mates place
	
	3. What led to you leaving OoHC/YJ
	
	4. How did you prepare for leaving OoHC/YJ? who, if anyone, helped you prepare?
	
	5. What support did you have (if any) to help you adjust after you left OoHC/YJ?
	Prompt Questions:
	    • Were you offered any support to find a place to stay?
	    • Did you have any help to find a job, or go to school, tafe or uni?
	    • Did anyone help you manage money, set up a bank account and the other 'adulting things of life?
	    • What support would have been helpful in getting a home (out of home care or youth justice?

Close	Thank you for your time If we have any follow up questions, would you be open to talking with us again? If so, what's the best way to get in contact with you?

Discussion Guide: Professional

Principles	• Use plain language where possible, use the language the person you are speaking to uses. • Speaking to us is completely optional and they can stop at any time. • Do no additional harm. • Ask permission before making any notes on paper or using an app (e.g. Otter).
In screening capture	• Role • Years of experience • Experience of YJ • Experience of OoHC

Structure	Question
Opening	We are researching young people's experiences leaving youth justice and out of home care and transitioning to adult life. This research will be used to design better ways of supporting young people adjusting to life after out of home care or youth justice. We would like to talk to you about your experience. Your identity will be protected and any details you share will be anonymised (including your organisation). Any information collected will be used for research purposes only. Is it okay for us to make notes of this conversation using a voice to text app? This is just so we can recall the information you share accurately. This decision is up to you and you can say no.
Screener Questions	1. What is your role? 2. Do you have direct (frontline) contact with young people as they transition from OoHC/YJ in your role?
Questions	1. What are the standard practices/ or steps that your organisation or department takes at each stage a young person reaches or passes a key transition point? (e.g. end of order, release, end of guardianship) 2. What are the steps you take (or would like to take) to prepare young people for key transition points? (e.g. end of order, release, end of guardianship) 3. Can you give an example of where this has worked well? Why? Can you give an example of where this hasn't worked well? Why? 4. What could be done better to prepare young people for these transition points? 5. How long do young people typically stay in their next accommodation once they transition from (OoHC / YJ)? What are your observations about young people's experience in this next accommodation? 6. What challenges have you observed for young people adjusting to life after (OoHC / YJ) 7. 7. In your experiences working with young people, what have been the protective factors that mean some young people do better than others when transitioning from (OoHC / YJ)?
Close	Thank you for your time If we have any follow up questions, would you be open to talking with us again? If so, what's the best way to get in contact with you?

The Constellation Project

> **"There is so much power in these stories to drive change. Their profound reality can bring social issues to the forefront by making them real to others and evoking emotions and personal connection."**

Acknowledgement

We give our deep appreciation to the young people who gave their valuable time and shared their experiences and insights through interviews. We hope we have done justice to the stories you shared and that your voices are listened to and acted upon. We also deeply thank the people who work with young people in the child protection and youth justice systems that spoke with us and/or supported young people in speaking with us.

Download the Report here:

Contact:
team@theconstellationproject.com.au

The Constellation Project