BETTER FUTURES
HOUSING AND LIVING SKILLS OFFER PRACTICE GUIDE

2024

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Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

VICTORIA
State Government

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IN THIS GUIDE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

5 Offers	The planning and support presented to young people to achieve their goals in 5 key life areas – Education, Employment, Health and Wellbeing, Connections, and Housing and Living Skills
ACAC	Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
Better Futures practitioners	Development Coaches and Community Connectors
BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
Care services	Formerly Out-of-Home Care
Care team	Group of people who jointly care for a young person during their in care phase
Care team meetings	Gathering of relevant professionals who meet to discuss with the young person their day-to-day care in accordance with the overall case, transition and cultural plans
Case manager	Refers to Child Protection practitioners and contracted case managers
Community Connector	Better Futures practitioners focused on building supportive networks, pathways and housing and living skills for young people in their communities
CRIS	Client Relationship Information System
CRISSP	Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers
Development Coach	Better Futures practitioners focused on working directly with young people
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victorian Government)
First Nations	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
EFY Foyers	Education First Youth Foyers
Flexible funding	Sometimes known as brokerage; funding available to the young person to support their goals for transition and independence.
Further education	Post-secondary school study at Technical and Further Education (TAFE) or university
In care	Phase referring to Better Futures service when a young person is in care services and subject to a Child Protection order
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
Mainstream	Opportunities beyond the service system that are readily available to family-connected young people, but which are often inaccessible to care-experienced young people
Post care	Phase referring to Better Futures service after a young person has transitioned from in care
Social capital	The resources provided to an individual through the social networks they hold e.g., financial assets, social networks and access to information and resources
Statutory order	A protection order made by the Children's Court of Victoria
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
THM	Transitional Housing Management
VHR	Victorian Housing Register

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The *Better Futures Housing and Living Skills Offer Practice Guide* provides guidance to support the delivery of housing and living skills-specific opportunities for young people as part of their transition to adulthood.

The primary audience for this Guide is Better Futures practitioners who are delivering the program across Victoria.

The Guide shares good practice tips and ideas to help Better Futures practitioners think creatively about how they plan and deliver the Housing and Living Skills Offer with young people. It also outlines how practitioners can use youth coaching strategies and resources with an Advantaged Thinking approach.

Practice guides have been developed for each of the 5 Offers:

- Education
- Employment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Connections
- Housing and Living Skills.

They form part of the **Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework** suite of tools and resources.

First Nations young people

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) play an important role in delivering Better Futures by ensuring that First Nations young people have every opportunity to access culturally safe spaces, people and practice.

Better Futures Our Way: A Practice Guide for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations has been designed by ACCOs to provide practice wisdom and guidance about how the program can best be delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. It also describes the procedures, tools and templates that guide and resource the work of ACCO-based Better Futures practitioners.

The *Housing and Living Skills Offer Practice Guide* contains references to Better Futures Our Way as well as links to specific connections offerings available to First Nations young people.

Young people with disability

Better Futures recognises that young people with disability may require additional supports during their transition to adulthood.

The **Better Futures Disability Practice Guide** equips service providers with the skills and knowledge to work in an Advantaged Thinking way with young people with disability, and how best to access the resources, services and help available.

This Guide contains references to the Disability Practice Guide.

ABOUT BETTER FUTURES AND THE 5 OFFERS

Better Futures

Better Futures is a practice model that aims to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care to adulthood, from 15 years and 9 months to 21 years. Support is tailored to meet a young person's individual needs with access to flexible funding to support their transition goals.

Better Futures assists these young people:

- to become independent yet connected adults
- to discover who they want to be and what they want to do in the future
- to establish a connected, sustainable livelihood
- to develop the capacity to thrive.

The support provided to young people by Better Futures practitioners is guided by the Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework.

Advantaged Thinking focuses on an individual's strengths, not their weaknesses or what they need to overcome. It doesn't define people by their problems but instead focuses on their dreams, talents and aspirations, and invests in their potential.

Snap that Stigma

Care-experienced young people are smart, determined and passionate.

The Advantaged Thinking approach asks us to consider how we promote these young people in relation:

- to how we recognise and promote their skills to the wider community
- to whether we invest the same time and resources into coaching young people to build thriving livelihoods as we do to supporting them to survive or cope with challenges.

CREATE Foundation has developed a series of videos that promote positive outcomes for young people. These videos are designed to challenge the way the public understands young people with a care experience.

The 5 Offers

The 5 Offers are:

Education
Creating a bridge to mainstream education for young people

Employment
Providing young people with access to real-world work experience and job opportunities

Health and Wellbeing
Focusing on developing young people's capacity to thrive

Connections
Encouraging thriving and local connections that support young people to achieve their goals

Housing and Living Skills
Assisting young people to access and sustain housing

The 5 Offers are designed to give young people access to new opportunities, and to identify their aspirations and goals as they plan their transition to adulthood. They also provide structure for Development Coaches and Community Connectors in their work of harnessing opportunities for young people that will enable them:

- to build their personal agency and make positive decisions
- to access the right supports, connections and resources at the right time
- to make helpful contacts and access networks that build their social capital
- to develop the skills and qualifications they need to follow their goals
- to set themselves up for a sustainable, thriving livelihood.

Exploring new opportunities, and encouraging participation in them, can uncover interests and spark motivation for young people. However, it is also okay if they are not motivated to take up all 5 Offers at the start, particularly as engaging with one Offer will often lead to opportunities in the other areas.

WHAT THE HOUSING AND LIVING SKILLS OFFER IS

Stable, safe and affordable housing is crucial for young people's overall health and wellbeing, as it enables them to develop the capabilities they need to engage in social activities, pursue employment and transition successfully to adulthood.

The Housing and Living Skills Offer seeks to support young people to build the skills and connections required to access, sustain and maintain independent living.

The Offer focuses on coaching young people to be aspirational about their future housing and to build their readiness for independent living. Better Futures Development Coaches can work with young people in developing the living skills they need, and in locating, accessing and sustaining a private rental property. This can either be as a sole tenant or in a share household, and should preferably be situated close to planned education, training or work opportunities and support networks.

Better Futures practitioners deliver on the Housing and Living Skills Offer by providing young people with the resources, opportunities and support they need:

- to recognise their existing knowledge and skills to access and maintain a range of housing options
- building on key living skills such as financial literacy, legal rights and obligations, cooking and self-care
- to assist them in developing meaningful housing and living skills goals and aspirations, and plans to achieve them
- to explore a range of opportunities to facilitate housing and living skills outcomes – from learning about day-to-day independent living skills to engaging in education and employment opportunities that increase earnings and limit experiences of precarious housing
- to promote access to mainstream housing options and support readiness in independent living skills to take them up
- to access ongoing coaching around independent living goal setting, planning and reflection, and to recognise and celebrate progress and achievement.

Enabling young people to develop a personal vision and life goals gives them agency and self-direction about their future. They are then better equipped to access, engage in and develop the skills they need to sustain and maintain independent living.

Enabling young people to develop a personal vision and goals provides them with agency and self-direction about their future.

WHY THE HOUSING AND LIVING SKILLS OFFER IS IMPORTANT

Young people preparing to transition from care to adulthood face multiple hurdles when looking for somewhere secure to live. These include a dearth of affordable housing stock close to training and work opportunities, poor support networks or social capital, and landlords discriminating against young people without credentials.

The Commission for Children and Young People's 2020 Keep Caring report found that at least one-third of young people transitioning from care will experience homelessness.* These young people are particularly vulnerable to homeless due to their limited options for a supported transition to independent living. This is because many of them do not have close relationships with family or carers due to the conflict and relationship breakdowns that led to them having to move out of home in the first place, even if it meant moving into homelessness.

Some of the young people from foster care placements do have expectations of ongoing support and accommodation. However, even when relationships with carers were perceived to be positive, several indicated that they could not rely on unlimited support or hope to stay with carers in the longer term.

> ***When you're a foster kid, you're sort of on your own for the most part. If you're really lucky you might have a bit of support from your foster family. But most of the time you've really got to try and get things for yourself.***
>
> — Care experienced young person

The Housing and Living Skills Offer provides care-experienced young people with the necessary capabilities and resources to sustain independent living and make a successful transition to adulthood. These include:

- engaging in living skills and self-care learning to look after themselves and maintain positive relationships with co-tenants
- learning financial skills and assets to support entry into private rental housing or to sustain a tenancy, including access to financial services, advice and/or income support
- enabling social networks and positive relationships to sustain independent living in a share household
- developing basic housing residency skills and knowledge to access, sustain and maintain a tenancy, including financial commitments, legal obligations and other aspects of being in a share household
- accessing education, vocational training and employment-related resources, skills and capabilities to maximise young people's chances of gaining paid employment as a protective factor against poverty and homelessness.

Stable accommodation is crucial for young people to thrive and accomplish their goals. The Housing and Living Skills Offer provides them with the opportunity to identify and access the necessary skills, capabilities and resources to secure housing and establish sustainable independence. Once young people have achieved stable housing, they will be in a much stronger position to pursue and achieve their goals and aspirations across the Education, Employment, Health and Wellbeing, and Connections Offers.

The Housing and Living Skills Offer provides young people with the opportunity to identify and access the necessary skills, capabilities and resources to secure housing and establish sustainable independence.

*Commission for Children and Young People 2020, *Keep Caring: Systemic inquiry into services for young people transitioning from out-of-home care*, Commission for Children and Young People, Melbourne, p. 3.

COLLABORATE: HOUSING AND LIVING SKILLS OFFER

The role of Better Futures in delivering the Housing and Living Skills Offer is to work with young people to identify their own goals, develop assets and build networks within their community, all of which can help them to thrive. To do this, the Development Coach will collaborate with the Community Connector, housing services and a range of community stakeholders to meet young people's needs across the various aspects of housing and living skills.

Development Coaches

Development Coaches do not need to be experts on housing and independent living. Their role is to inspire and motivate, be reflective, supportive and an advocate for the young person.

They play a critical role in coaching young people to set meaningful goals and providing them with the resources, opportunities, networks and support they need to live independently.

Development Coaches should know where to go for specialist advice and what must be put in place to support the young person in their housing and independent living goals. They will also need to manage young people's expectations around what they can and cannot do within their role to assist them in accessing and sustaining stable housing.

Some Development Coaches report feeling apprehensive about being too aspirational given the additional challenges care-experienced young people face when accessing housing. However, it is not unreasonable for a young person to aspire to a stable and safe place to call home, and Development Coaches will work with them as they prepare for independent living.

The young person's aspirations should provide the context to develop a process, or readiness pathway, that outlines the steps needed to achieve their goals. Development Coaches will then work with young people to determine:

- their priorities
- what it will take to reach their goals
- how motivated they are to engage meaningfully
- what support they need to succeed.

Development Coaches play a critical role in coaching young people to set meaningful goals and providing them with the resources, opportunities, networks and support they need:

- to access, sustain and maintain stable accommodation
- to lead healthy and independent lifestyles
- to build their social capital.

Development Coaches can make connections within the housing sector and the broader community who can provide specialist housing advice about what elements must be put in place to support the young person in their individual goals and transition planning.

> ***The motivation is to give every young person the opportunity to find housing, break down the barriers to housing providers, and provide more streamlined ways to navigate the sector. It's a matter of understanding the care sector to relieve some of the anxieties and troubleshoot for young people to find appropriate housing. Consultation in this process is very important to provide life skills to assist with their transition.***
>
> — Development Coach

Consistent, regular and open communication between the Development Coach and Community Connector is necessary to bridge the two roles. Community Connectors can link Development Coaches into opportunities, activities and information available to young people. The Development Coach can coordinate how different support people can work with the young person to prepare them to participate and to overcome any barriers to engagement.

Development Coaches then share with Community Connectors the information they have about the young person's interests, goals and skills. Community Connectors use this information to tailor their research and support in finding appropriate local opportunities in which the young person can participate.

Development Coaches and Community Connectors will work together to understand local needs, consistent themes, gaps and opportunities. This enables them to create or seek out opportunities and activities across the service area not just at an individual level, but at a service level as well.

Community Connectors

Community Connectors can connect young people to opportunities that enable them to progress and achieve their housing and living skills goals. They support the work of Development Coaches by bridging the gap between a young person's goals and the opportunities and connections that the young person can engage with to realise those goals.

Community Connectors can use their skills in networking and coordination to create partnerships and networks within and across local communities. This helps to increase local support for young people and strengthen their social capital and community connectedness.

Community Connectors have housing and living skills-specific partnerships, networks and resources in their local area, including:

- housing services and programs such as Village 21 and Youth Foyers
- local housing options, e.g., taster flats, zipper units, boarding houses, community housing
- real estate agents
- financial literacy services and workshops, e.g., budgeting, paying bills, submitting a tax return, saving money, paying off debt
- living skills workshops, e.g., gathering 100 points of ID, cleaning, cooking, personal hygiene
- services and workshops to build basic skills around maintaining a tenancy, e.g., financial commitments, legal obligations, sharing a space with others
- health and therapeutic services
- disability advocacy and support organisations
- LGBTQIA+ communities and support services
- family violence services
- local councils
- ACCOs and First Nations programs and services
- youth and multicultural programs and services
- mentoring.

Community Connectors can support housing and living skills activities that help young people to work on specific goals, to broaden their knowledge and to build and apply their skills to thrive, such as:

- linking them in with mentors, volunteers and peers with whom they can build trusting and lasting relationships
- warm referrals to housing services
- access to information about housing options
- support to join community-based groups, activities or projects like sports teams, university or TAFE clubs, fundraising events or gender identity groups
- advocating for the young person's goals in care team meetings or a secondary consult
- engagement in living skills programs and activities
- making sure they are aware of opportunities where they can build living skills, social capital and engage with their community
- coordinating with workers or carers to ensure they have transport to attend opportunities
- introducing other experiences that are not directly related to housing but which build both readiness to participate and social capital (e.g. developing mentor relationships).

The Community Connector's role will be different in each area, as it is dependent upon on the provider's capacity, young people's interests and motivations, and local area arrangements. The Development Coach still directly coaches and supports the young person to engage with these opportunities, unless negotiated otherwise with the Community Connector.

Go to *Referral to Community Connector*

Go to *Referral to Community Connections Practice Guide*

Collaborative practice

Collaboration between Community Connectors and Better Futures teams at both the service and individual levels is vital. At the service level, collaboration can determine the priority areas for Community Connections based on the needs, goals, talents and aspirations of young people. At the individual level, collaboration can facilitate referrals and connect young people with mentors or various activities.

Strategies for collaboration with Better Futures include:

- **Co-location**
  Co-locating Community Connectors within Better Futures teams promotes effective collaboration. If delivered by a different organisation, consider part-time co-location or attending operational meetings to ensure collaboration and promotion of Community Connections.
- **Provider and operational meetings**
  Collaborating with key Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) staff and managers overseeing data on young people transitioning to adulthood to better understand the local service system, networks, opportunities and gaps. Regular meetings between Better Futures and Community Connections providers enables Community Connectors to embed themselves in local planning and practice.
- **Attendance at intake meetings**
  Attending intake meetings enables Community Connectors to explore opportunities, promote activities and develop collaborative responses. Strategic attendance at some meetings is particularly beneficial for assisting young people with limited connections.
- **Regular team meetings**
  Attending Better Futures team meetings and allocation meetings fosters collaborations and allows Community Connectors to provide secondary consultation or direct support in facilitating Community Connections.

Housing and living skills pathways

Engaging young people in the Housing and Living Skills Offer can support them to access and maintain housing, and build the everyday living skills necessary to lead a social, productive and thriving independent life.

Better Futures practitioners must provide young people with support to access and navigate information, resources, opportunities, networks, advice, and emotional and financial support in developing their housing and living skills. Planning for this Offer should also focus on encouraging, informing and resourcing those goals and aspirations held by young people that contribute to keeping them out of homelessness: for example, a stable relationship with a trusted adult, reconnecting with family or kin, education and employment, and social participation and community connection.

Go to *Other housing and living skills resources*

The following sections cover some of the key topics, service supports and funding options that are available to build young people's capacity to transition successfully to independent living.

Victoria is experiencing an ongoing housing crisis with rising house prices, limited availability of affordable rentals and a growing number of people facing homelessness. The crisis is exacerbated by an inadequate supply of social housing and increasing demand driven by population growth and economic factors.

Better Futures Development Coaches have a challenging role in finding suitable accommodation options for the young people with whom they work. This is compounded by different perceptions about what aspects of leaving care planning should be led by carers and care services, and the limited function of Better Futures during the in care phase.

Typically, housing pathways for young people transitioning from care will comprise one of the following:

- staying in place with their approved foster or kinship carer with the support of Home Stretch
- private rentals and share households
- transitional supported accommodation
- reconnection to family and kin at the end of an order, resulting in a move into the parental or family member's home
- take-up of a place in social, public or community housing
- a planned move into crisis and emergency accommodation where a higher level of support may be available.

Better Futures Development Coaches need to provide young people with clear, accessible information about realistic and achievable housing options. The preferred housing pathway is a private rental, consistent with the aspirations of most young people in the community. While working towards this, Development Coaches should explore other avenues with the young person so they are fully informed about available housing options.

sortli

The Sortli app is designed by young people, for young people. It is a great place for them to start to take charge of their transition to adulthood. Sortli includes Victorian-specific information and step-by-step guides for navigating life's big challenges, such as:

- finding a place to live
- looking after your health
- managing your money
- finding a job
- doing some training
- understanding your legal rights.

Sortlii supports the Advantaged Thinking approach by equipping young people with the necessary tools and information to make advantageous choices for their transition planning.

Home Stretch and staying in place

Home Stretch is delivered via the Better Futures model. Through Home Stretch, eligible young people have the option of:

1. remaining with their approved kinship, foster or permanent carer post order up to the age of 21, supported by a Home Stretch carer allowance
2. accessing a Home Stretch allowance, administered by Better Futures, to support them with housing costs in an approved independent living arrangement post order up to 21 years of age.

The program provides an accommodation allowance, case work support and flexible funding to facilitate the young person's access to education, employment, community and cultural connections and health and wellbeing supports.

The accommodation allowance supports young people and carers to continue kinship care, foster care and permanent care living arrangements, or helps young people transition to other housing options (for example, private rental).

A referral to Home Stretch will form part of care team discussions when a young person turns 15 years and 9 months. For young people on permanent care orders this happens at 18 years. Young people will be referred to Home Stretch by their case manager – DFFH Child Protection, contracted or Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) –and a Better Futures practitioner. A young person (and carer where relevant) must consent to the referral.

For young people on a permanent care order, Permanent Care and Adoptive Families or the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency can refer to Better Futures and Home Stretch.

For information on the application procedure for Home Stretch, see *Operational information*.

Go to *Operational information*

Private rentals and share households

Despite the scarcity of affordable properties for rental in many areas, houses with three or more bedrooms at the lower end of the market do exist. To be affordable, these properties would require at least three or more people to establish a shared tenancy.

Development Coaches can proactively facilitate a group of young people to join together to establish this sort of shared private tenancy by identifying and working with potential co-tenants.

To ready young people for independent living in either private rental or a share household, it is essential to build their life and living skills and capabilities before they turn 18. There are some helpful guides and information to help prepare them to transition to shared or private housing, such as:

- Youth Central's Moving out and Renting and Share Housing page
- Sortli's A place to live and Life skills pages.

Development Coaches can also help with information on shared and private housing, including where to find listings for rentals and housemates, and how to apply.

Some Better Futures providers have built connections with local housing providers and real estate agents. These partnerships have delivered opportunities such as workshops, at which young people can learn about their rights as tenants, what contracts mean, safety awareness, and understanding the housing selection process.

To develop partnerships with local real estate agencies and housing providers, Better Futures practitioners can:

- speak with real estate agents from an organisational perspective, rather than numerous one-off applications for a range of young people
- build relationships with landlords and real estate agencies and advocate on behalf of young people for accommodation providers to have more belief in care-experienced young people
- coach young people on share households and healthy relationship skills
- ensure they have the living skills they need to sustain their tenancy, and to understand both their own tenant rights and the expectations of being a tenant
- ensure that young people understand the expectations of being a tenant, as well as their own tenant rights
- support young people to think about their future beyond services, and step that out with them.

Private Rental Assistance Program

The Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP) provides those at risk of or experiencing homelessness with practical and financial support to access or maintain a private rental tenancy. It combines private rental brokers to leverage private rental opportunities, flexible financial support, and PRAP Plus – time-limited case management for those needing extra help.

Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program (APRAP) and APRAP Plus, which operate similarly to PRAP and PRAP Plus, are targeted at First Nations households and located in five DFFH local areas: Western Melbourne, North Eastern Melbourne, Mallee, East Gippsland and Loddon.

Young people aged 18 and over can access PRAP through referrals from a range of sources, including homelessness access points, local real estate agents, emergency relief workers, financial counsellors and other support services.

Transitional supported accommodation

Lead Tenant and Head Lease programs

Lead Tenant is a care services placement option providing accommodation and support to young people aged 16 to 18 years. Lead Tenants are people who live with young people in a shared household to create a safe and supportive living environment which supports their transition to independent living.

Supported by professional staff, Lead Tenants act as positive role models for the young people with whom they share, both in managing their own day-to-day routines and commitments, and more broadly in their personal conduct within the house and the community.

Head Lease is where a community housing provider rents private rental property from a landlord or owner, and then on-lets the property to tenants, such as young people transitioning from care. Tenants pay an agreed rent to the provider, which in the case of a subsidised rent may be less than the rent paid by the provider to the landlord.

Lead Tenant and Head Lease options are accessed through care providers and can be funded via Targeted Care Package arrangements.

Residential care 'zipper units'

'Zipper units' offer a stepped-down approach from residential care, allowing a young person to live semi-independently as they learn and put into practice living skills such as cooking, cleaning and budgeting. Some residents may require minimal assistance and choose to live more independently, while others may require additional support and prefer a closer connection to support.

Youth Foyers

Youth Foyers provide accommodation for up to two years to support young people aged 16–24 who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness to achieve sustainable education, employment, housing and community connections. Youth Foyers have onsite support and are either congregate models with individual studio apartments under one roof, or cluster models with several units on a site and communal spaces. Referrals to Youth Foyers are made through homelessness access points or by direct application.

Education First Youth Foyers

Education First Youth (EFY) Foyers are integrated learning and accommodation centres that provide young people aged 16–24 years who are at risk of homelessness with accommodation and access to education, training, employment and other supports.

The Foyers also provide coaching, mentoring, skills development and peer support for these young people, who in turn commit to undertake education and training for two years. Student accommodation is co-located on TAFE campuses and support is provided by the TAFE, housing providers and youth support partners.

EFY Foyers are suitable for young people in Better Futures who are keen to get into, and to stay in, education and training. For these young people, Better Futures practitioners can:

- explore their individual education goals with them
- discuss the opportunities and support available at EFY Foyers
- help them apply by filling out and submitting a EFY Foyer readiness form.

Victoria currently has three EFY Foyers, two in Melbourne (Glen Waverly, Broadmeadows) and one in Shepparton.

There are also several other Youth Foyers in Victoria (and across Australia) that can provide supported accommodation for young people for up to two years while they pursue their education or employment goals.

For a full list of locations and referral processes see Foyer Locations & Referrals – The Foyer Foundation.

Small-scale creative transitional accommodation options

There are a number of transitional accommodation options across Victoria that provide young people with a home in which to recover, stabilise, develop living skills and prepare for longer term housing. Commonly, a percentage of the young person's income goes towards rental payment.

These accommodation options include:

- Village 21, Anglicare (Preston): places for six care-experienced young people aged 18–21 years for up to three years.
- The Coccoon, Bridge It (St Kilda): places for seven female-identifying care-experienced young people aged 17–21 years for up to 12 months.
- Going Out and Living Successfully (GOALS) Program, Berry Street (Morwell, Traralgon): places for care-experienced young people aged 16–25 years up to 2 years.

These supported housing options provide creative and person-centred support, such as:

- live in staff and/or mentors
- individual case management focusing on residents' identified goals
- assistance with transitioning into shared or private rentals
- a focus on study and employment pathways
- opportunities for communal activities like cooking, gardening and learning life skills.

Reconnection to family and kin

If a young person is considering a return to family, the role of the Better Futures practitioner should be to support them to resolve the factors that may have contributed to their housing crisis or homelessness in the first place. To have a reasonable prospect of a successful move, young people may require specialist support from external services to mediate or resolve family conflict or disputes. As part of the transition planning, emphasis would then be placed on developing strategies for preventing or resolving any re-emerging issues.

Kids Under Cover is a place-based housing option, providing youth-specific and appropriate studio apartments for young people aged 12–25. It works to prevent youth homelessness by keeping young people engaged in education and connected with carers or family and their community. See Kids Under Cover's website for more on the studio program and how to apply.

With appropriate support and safety planning, young people who go back to live with their parents often show better outcomes in many areas than those who do not.

Providing the young person with sources of support on relationship matters will also assist in effective transition planning for their return to family. External mediation, both to prepare them for a move back to family and when they leave their current accommodation, is also recommended to strengthen the prospect of a successful outcome. In some circumstances, a trial period with family may be considered as an intermediate step followed by a return to their current accommodation.

This process should be led by the young person, with the Development Coach offering supported access to family reunification orders and family mediation programs. Other useful supports are are activities that connect young people to positive, caring relationships, and mainstream opportunities and services like Relationships Victoria and Family Relationship Centres.

Social, public and community housing

Public or community housing may be an option for some young people who have long-term or complex needs that limit their capacity to obtain or sustain private rental or shared housing. However, the Advantaged Thinking approach and model encourages all young people, where possible, to aspire to the pathway taken by their contemporaries, that of transitioning from the parental home to independent living. Public housing has been shown to trap young people into a lifetime of welfare dependence or limit their future social and economic participation.

As such, applications for public housing should be considered only as a last resort for young people who have demonstrated that they are unlikely to be able to sustain independent living due to emerging or worsening health or personal issues. In most, if not all instances, the development of these issues – such as metal illness, disability, substance abuse – will necessitate a planned transition by the young person into a higher level of supported housing such as that provided by Specialist Homelessness Services (see next page).

Victorian Housing Register

The Victorian Housing Register is where people put their name down on a long waiting list for social, public and community housing in Victoria. Applicants need first to **register with Housing Vic online services via myGov**.

For most young people, a move into public housing as an independent adult is not on their horizon. However, if needed, Better Futures practitioners can offer young people support to apply and get on the VHR waiting list before they leave care as a potential safety-net measure. This may prevent the young person from becoming homeless if they have not secured an alternative housing option by 18.

Better Futures practitioners can support young people to submit a **Register of Interest Application** to apply for housing from the VHR.

Social housing

Social housing is both short- and long-term rental housing that is owned and run by the government or not-for-profit agencies. It includes public rental housing, as well as state-owned and managed, mainstream and community housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and housing provided under the Crisis Accommodation Program.

Public housing

Public housing is rental housing provided and managed by the Victorian state government. Tenants pay no more than 25% of their income in rent.

There are **discounts, loans and concessions** available for public housing renters.

Community housing

Community housing is secure, affordable, long-term housing that is locally managed by not-for-profit organisations for people on low incomes or with particular needs. Tenants pay 25–30% of their income towards rent and the Community Housing provider receives 100% of the Commonwealth Rent Assistance. Tenants sign a tenancy agreement and have the same rights as both public housing and private tenants.

This webpage lists all registered housing agencies in Victoria.

First Nations Community Housing

Aboriginal Housing Victoria has transitioned to the VHR. All applications for housing now need to be lodged via one application form through the VHR. This gives applicants a single point of entry to access to a broader range of social housing options including community housing, Aboriginal Housing Victoria only, and/or public housing.

Access online or paper applications by visiting **housing.vic.gov.au/apply-social-housing**.

If a young person is considering a return to family, the role of the Better Futures practitioner should be to support them to resolve the factors that may have contributed to their housing crisis or homelessness in the first place.

Support for public renters

The Tenancy Plus support program aims to prevent homelessness and support renters to stay in housing. Agencies providing the program work with people needing assistance to create a support plan, and can also connect people to a range of other local support services. Community housing renters on the Victorian Housing Register are also eligible for Tenancy Plus.

The Housing Victoria website lists Tenancy Plus support providers.

Crisis and emergency accommodation

Specialist Homelessness Services provides a vital safety net for, and direct response to, people experiencing homelessness, who are in crisis situations or at risk of homelessness.

People experiencing homelessness can call 1800 825 955, state-wide 24-hour toll-free number that will divert the caller to the nearest access point. There they will be helped to resolve their immediate crisis with emergency accommodation, food and medical treatment if required.

Opening Doors

Opening Doors Framework is a Victorian state-wide initiative that aims to improve access to housing and support services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Opening Doors access points are physical locations where people can seek assistance and information about housing options, support services and homelessness prevention programs. They serve as centralised hubs from which to provide a coordinated service response to assess individual circumstances, provide guidance and make appropriate referrals to relevant services based on the person's needs.

These homelessness access points are the primary means of accessing support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Frontyard is a state-wide youth-specific access point for young people aged 16–24 years. It is operated by Melbourne City Mission and can be accessed at 19 King Street, Melbourne or by calling 03 9611 2411 or toll free 1800 800 531.

The DFFH Crisis Accommodation website lists all state-wide specialist services and local homelessness support.

Family violence

Individuals experiencing family violence can contact The Orange Door, Monday to Friday 9am–5pm. After hours, contact Safe Steps on 1800 015 188 or visit safesteps.org.au.

People using violence can find support with 1800 RESPECT, MensLine Australia, Men's Referral Service.

Living skills

Development Coaches will be curious about young people's aspirations for the life they want to lead, and coaching conversations are the ideal place for them to listen and find out more. Allow young people to lead these conversations so you can better understand their priorities and motivations. Community Connectors can then tap into what emerges and offer them relevant opportunities that will build the independent living skills they have identified as essential to managing and maintaining safe and secure housing and independent living arrangements.

By working closely with young people in these coaching conversations, Development Coaches are better able to understand each individual's circumstances, capabilities and assets. Knowing a young person's motivations and challenges allows Better Futures practitioners to identify individual opportunities for developing skills and knowledge, and to tailor the form and level of support to their needs and readiness to participate. This approach moves away from the traditional practice of identifying and assessing young people by their deficits. Instead, it focuses on being curious and exploring with young people to understand what inspires and motivates them.

Wombat Everyday Life Skills resources

The Wombat Everyday Life Skills website (for Better Futures practitioners) and tool (for young people) are two free interlinked resources that support the development of life skills.

Development Coaches can use the **Everyday Life Skills website:**

- to explore and research topics that have come up with the young person in conversation
- to plan how to approach a topic, e.g., personal hygiene
- to gather relevant resources such as tips, advice infographics, YouTube videos and links to further information on a range of life skills topics
- to navigate information about a topic alongside a young person until they are comfortable to access the information independently.

Young people can use the **Everyday Life Skills online tool:**

- to prepare for independent living
- to identify their strengths and skills
- to build their independent living skills with a learning plan
- to advocate for resources like housing and funding.

Saver Plus

Saver Plus, which is run in partnership between the Brotherhood of St Laurence and the ANZ Bank, is a financial education and matched savings program for individuals to develop life-long savings habits. Young people set savings goals for education-related items and the ANZ matches their savings up to $500. The program also offers Money Minded financial literacy education workshops.

To be eligible for Saver Plus, a young person must:

- have a Health Care card or Pensioner Concession card, and an eligible Centrelink payment
- be in school OR have a child in school (can be starting school next year).
- have regular income from work (either the young person or their partner).
- be 18 years old.

Saver Plus is run in partnership with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ bank.

Youthlaw Legal Pod

The Youthlaw Legal Pod program is a free long-term legal service for care-experienced young people aged 18–25. The program provides them with ongoing legal support for up to three years and includes a legal health check that can identify any legal matters young people are facing.

Legal Pod lawyers will be available when needed, and young people are eligible for assistance if they:

- are aged 18 to 25
- live in Victoria
- have had an experience in care services, including foster, kinship or residential care
- need help with one or more of the following areas of law.

Youthlaw Legal Pod can help with a wide range of legal problems including:

- fines
- debts
- tenancy
- government decisions
- requests for records
- victim of crime applications
- discrimination
- your rights at work.

For criminal charges or going to court, Youthlaw Legal Pod can connect the young person with a criminal lawyer, and with other lawyers for family law e.g., separation, child protection, personal injury claims.

Contact legalpod@youthlaw.asn.au or call +61 3 9113 9500 and ask to speak with the Legal Pod lawyer.

Go to *Other housing and living skills resources*

Knowing a young person's motivations and challenges allows Better Futures practitioners to identify individual opportunities for developing skills and knowledge, and to tailor the form and level of support to their needs and readiness to participate. This approach moves away from the traditional practice of identifying and assessing young people by their deficits.

Better Futures practitioners can further support all these elements of housing and living skills by coordinating a range of activities, such as those listed here, with young people and other stakeholders. They include:

- advocate for critical independent living skills preparation to be started while in care
- help young people to understand the transition between in care and post care
- explore online housing and living skills information resources that are targeted at young people, and develop their skills to seek out and access relevant information, e.g. Foundation for Young Adults: How to Adult video series, Wombat Everyday Life Skills, Sortli, Create Your Future, or social media demonstration videos on 'how to' clean, cook, etc.
- facilitate access to housing or social connections that have been self-identified or requested by the young person
- recognise past experiences, skills and capabilities for independent living
- assist with accessing information on housing options and living skills
- source activities focused on developing, applying and practising daily living skills in a supportive and social environment, e.g., neighbourhood houses, Local Learning and Employment Networks programs to get 100 points of ID, council- and community services-run workshops on health and nutrition
- create opportunities to engage in discussions around living skills and knowledge about finances, tenancy, and social and self-care skills
- develop supportive and trusted housing contacts and networks
- assist in accessing specialist relationship services, such as family mediation and counselling
- share delivery with local community groups and services, such as youth engagement programs and activities, to provide opportunities for social participation
- facilitate connections with peers who have similar goals and interests
- develop relationships with mentors who can model stability and demonstrate life skills
- facilitate access to meaningful and interesting activities that foster autonomy, belonging and competence.
- avoid cliff edges, where possible, with early engagement so the transition to adulthood is gradual and goes at the young person's pace and developmental stage.

WHEN ACTIVITIES SHOULD HAPPEN ACROSS THE PHASES OF CARE

The Better Futures model is separated into two phases:

- in care
- post care.

Figure 2 (see next page) shows the timeline in which young people can access various support for housing and living skills from 15 to 25 years of age.

Information sharing

Sharing information about the young person's talents, interests and goals is key to supporting them in their independence planning.

With consent, information should be shared with key people in the young person's life, such as their care team, Community Connectors and mentor.

Information sharing encourages collaboration and assists other connected support workers to plan relevant and appropriate opportunities for engaging the young person with the Housing and Living Skills Offer.

Better Futures practitioners may also review the young person's 15+ Care and Transition Plans for ideas about their housing and living skills goals. Keep in mind that plans and interests change, so it is important to regularly check in with the young person about whether they are still interested in these goals.

Figure 1: Better Futures 2 phases of care

Figure 2: Housing supports timeline

NB: Home Stretch support can start at 16 for young people transitioning from care. Home Stretch support starts at 18 for young people on permanent care orders.

In care

Development Coaches can do foundational work with young people through early engagement with them and secondary consultation with their case managers, care teams, carers and other professionals and key people in the young person's life. They can support young people to have a say in their transitional planning and promote future planning that is relevant to the young people's interests, goals and aspirations.

Community Connectors can provide secondary consultation to Development Coaches, or be invited to attend care team meetings for this purpose. Community Connectors may also meet with the young person to offer connection and outreach during the in care phase.

These early activities build trust in the service and establish a Better Futures warm contact for the young person.

Better Futures is a voluntary service. All planning and activities are done with the consent and engagement of the young person.

All planning and activities as part of Better Futures are done with the consent and engagement of the young person. Better Futures is a voluntary service, and one with which young people are more likely to engage when it:

- is person-centred
- responsive to their needs
- provides consistent contact and transparent follow-up
- is curious about their interests, skills and goals
- strives to inspire and motivate them.

The information in the following table gives Better Futures practitioners an understanding of what connections engagement activities they can provide to young people during the in care phase.

I invest some of my time into care team meetings so that I can see what work is being done with the young person. I can ask questions about what they like to do and where they're starting from.

—Community Connector

In care housing and living skills engagement activities

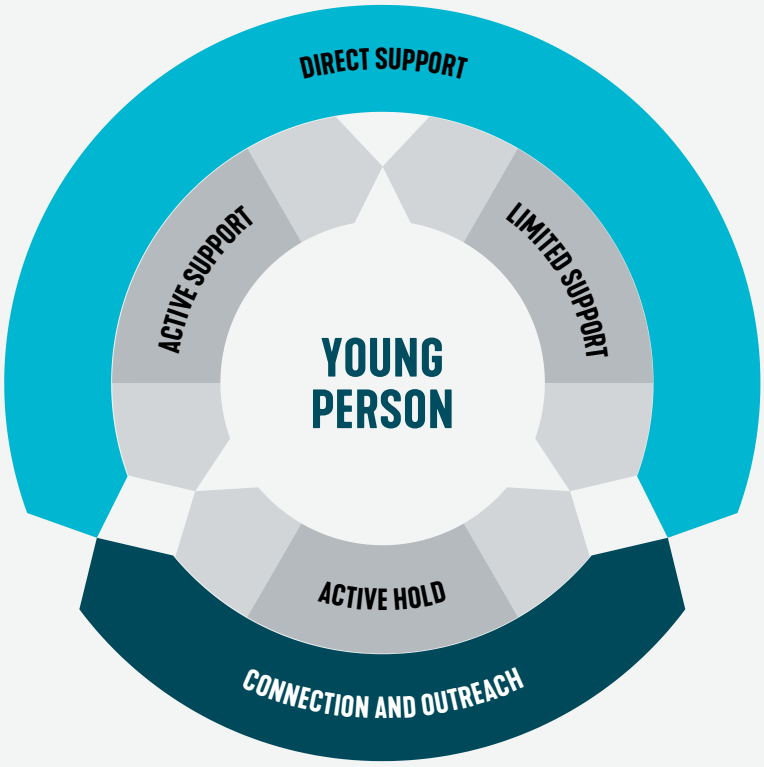
Development Coach action	Key people
Early engagement – secondary consultation	
Attend a care team meeting and identify housing and living skills opportunities relevant to the young person's 15+ care and transition plans and their support needs, goals and aspirations.	Young person, Development Coach and/or Community Connector, Child Protection and/or case contracted workers, care team
Advocate for the young person to have opportunities to practise life and living skills while living in a supported environment, e.g. home-based or residential care.	
Introduce the My Voice planning resources in the care team setting to assist planning and encourage involvement by the young person in voicing their housing and living skills goals, aspirations and preferences.	
Provide advice about a variety of housing and living skills opportunities – e.g., links to local living skills programs, self-care and social activities like joining a sports club, introduction to CREATE – that might interest the young person.	
Support access to Community Connections and mentoring if available.	Community Connector
Provide information and advice about other housing and living skills support services, and any funding for which the young person may be eligible, e.g. Better Futures flexible funding, Home Stretch, Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA), NDIS.	Young person, Child Protection, case contracted workers, care team, relevant contacts from community and government outreach programs
Provide advice about opportunities to connect First Nations young people to their culture and community and advocate for cultural plans to be central to transition planning. Discuss whether cultural connections to kin or a visit to Country could support their wellbeing and understanding of self and identity.	Local ACCO
Provide advice about specialised support for young people with disability and, if appropriate, advocate for the care team to start applications to disability services while the young person is still in care, including NDIS-funded housing options.	LAC or Disability Support Coordinator, DFFH Disability Practice Advice Team
Early engagement – flexible support	
Get to know the young person and build trust and rapport to develop a relationship.	Young person, Development Coach and/or Community Connector, local ACCO, Disability Support Coordinator
Start an aspirational conversation with the young person about where they are at with housing and living skills and what they are interested in. Discuss a practical approach to the next steps in housing and developing living skills. Sharing relevant networks, contacts and expertise can form strong foundations for young people as they transition to adulthood.	
Consult and contribute towards the development of plans, such as: • 15+ Care and Transition Plan • Cultural Plan (for First Nations young people) • NDIS plan (for young people with disability)	
Facilitate access to flexible funding to support and prepare young people as they transition from care to adulthood.	

Post care

The post care phase has two parts and three different levels of support. Young people will move between the different levels of support as their circumstances and needs change.

The information in the table on the next page gives Better Futures practitioners an understanding of what housing and living skills engagement activities they can provide to young people during the post care phase.

Figure 3: Better Futures levels of support



Direct support

Active Support

Sustained and ongoing support to explore, develop and engage with housing and living skills goals, pathways and opportunities.

Limited Support

Regular assertive outreach and connection, referrals, information and advice, access to flexible funding.

Connection and outreach

Active Hold

Episodic and targeted support as requested by the young person to develop or engage with something specific.

Development Coach action	Key people
Connection and outreach	
Gather enough information to establish a good understanding of the young person's situation, strengths, aspirations, support needs, and level of capability across a range of independent living skills.	Young person, Development Coach and/or Community Connector
Ensure the young person understands the types of support available, has the contact details of their worker and knows to get in touch with them if their circumstances change.	
As appropriate or requested, provide guidance, advice or secondary consultation to other supports in the young person's life, e.g., care services, Child Protection, disability services, foster, kin and permanent carers.	
Contact the young person quarterly (at a minimum). Ask about their Vision; how their housing and living skills goals and aspirations are going and reflect on progress. Check in on flexible funding requests and any referrals since the last contact. Keep the door open, check in on their circumstances and offer support.	
Involve the Community Connector and include them in The Deal. Face to face interactions enable the young person to make a connection with the Community Connector and the service.	
Liaise with the Community Connector to understand what opportunities are available to the young person.	
Supporting young people	
Identify and provide information about supports, eligibility for supports, programs and funding, opportunities and external funding options to achieve housing and living skills goals.	Young person, Development Coach, Community Connector, relevant contacts from community and government outreach programs
Inspire and motivate the young person to talk about their vision, and where housing and living skills fit into their aspirations.	Young person, Development Coach, Community Connector
Give information about and support access to Better Futures and Home Stretch flexible funding, including one-off funding requests.	
Offer practical support to develop life and living skills.	
Link the young person to mentoring, community and/or cultural connections to build their social networks.	
Co-develop and document plans and activities to support the young person to engage with housing connections and supportive people and places in the community. Review and reflect frequently.	
Assist the young person to develop networks, relationships and community connections.	
Provide assertive outreach for young people with whom you have infrequent contact.	
Support the young person to attend appointments and meetings, including with specialist housing services.	Disability Support Coordinator, other specialists
Support First Nations young people with cultural connections and return to Country.	Local ACCO

HOW TO DELIVER THE HOUSING AND LIVING SKILLS OFFER

Coaching practice

Coaching conversations between a Development Coach and a young person create a safe and supported space for the young person:

- to identify their hopes and dreams for the future
- to navigate their current reality
- to set aspirational goals to work towards.

Development Coaches should be aspirational about their own coaching. They need to be reflexive and examine their own beliefs, judgments and practices during coaching conversations and consider how these can influence what is offered to the young person.

Young people report that they find it easier to build trust and rapport when their coach:

- is approachable, positive and happy to see them
- has clear and consistent communication
- works with them in a way that suits them
- focuses on investing in them rather than 'fixing problems'
- follows through on actions in a timely way.

Better Futures practitioners must ensure that young people understand the types of support available and that they have the contact details of their worker and know to get in touch if their circumstances change.

> ***To open those first doors for yourself, you need to come from a foundation of support.***
>
> — Transitions from Care Youth Expert Advisory Group member

Young people in care often face a lot of additional challenges over which they have no control. Thus, it is important to acknowledge the effort they put into making things happen and the motivation, input and action it requires from them.

As the experts of their own lives, young people have the agency and choice to decide when and how they engage with what is being offered, and their capacity to do so.

Go to *Better Futures Our Way, 4.3 The Aboriginal Way – Practices and approaches that work*

The coaching cycle

Coaching relationships develop over time and generally follow a cycle of similar steps:

- Mutual contribution: The Deal
- Readiness
- Developing a vision
- Building opportunities for connections
- Reflection.

These steps demonstrate the young person's journey towards independence as they further develop goals and aspirations, take up opportunities and reflect on their next steps.

My Voice planning resources are designed to support this process by capturing the young person's voice within a coaching conversation that is situated around their goals and aspirations.

Coaching conversations allow space for a young person to consider how finding suitable and sustainable housing could support their pathway towards their aspirations, and what will motivate them to take the the first steps towards their goals.

For example, a young person's aspiration could be to live alone. Their motivation might stem from a desire for autonomy and agency over their living environment. This could prompt a conversation about resources for independent living. Together, you could explore the practical skills needed for maintaining a household and discuss opportunities, such as workshops in financial literacy or understanding tenancy agreements, that can empower the young person to achieve and sustain their housing aspirations.

As always, acknowledge the person in front of you and adjust the coaching resources as needed. Ask the young person if they have any accessibility requirements and be clear about what you can accommodate.

In the case of young people with disability or challenging behaviours, consideration should be given to what specialist input may be required.

Go to *Better Futures Disability Practice Guide, How to work with young people with disability*

Practice example

Sam (he/him) is 17.5 years old and living in residential care in metro Melbourne. His mental health has worsened as he prepares to transition out of care to independent living. The residential care workers have noticed that Sam regularly has bouts of depression and anxiety that inhibit his social participation. He rarely leaves the house during these times, and isn't studying or working. Sam's case manager has worked with LOOKOUT Education Centre to try and engage him in a school-based apprenticeship but he has not been attending.

Mutual contribution: The Deal

Better Futures aims to find or create a spark in young people that inspires and motivates them to pursue their aspirations and drive their planning work and outcomes. This is bolstered by the Development Coach's investment in discovering the young person's skills and talents and supporting them to overcome any barriers to further developing these.

What this looks like is negotiated via The Deal.

The Deal is an agreement that highlights the commitment and investment in the young person and their future. It is designed to prepare young people for the real world and the responsibilities that come with sustaining an independent livelihood.

The Deal agreement nurtures an Advantaged Thinking approach. It outlines the roles and expectations of both the Development Coach and the young person and how they will work together. It also outlines the services offered by Better Futures, such as financial assistance and individual planning and support across all of the 5 Offers.

It is the role of the Development Coach to work with the young person and:

- recognise and improve their skills, abilities and/or knowledge
- inspire and motivate them
- hold expectations and make demands of them
- facilitate further opportunities for developing their skills
- celebrate their successes and progress.

It is the role of the young person to be:

- an active participant and drive their coaching sessions and independence planning
- in charge of determining their own goals and aspirations
- actively engaged in research, communication, networking and other activities associated with goal setting.

The Deal gives young people more control by encouraging them to decide on which goals they want to pursue, the level of autonomy they require, and the type and level of support they need. This way of working builds the foundations of a reciprocal relationship, where the young person and the Development Coach are accountable for their actions. Holding high expectations of young people instils in them a sense that they are valued members of society with something to contribute.

Practice example

When Sam meets with Tess, the Better Futures Development Coach, for the first time, his case manager also attends to support his transition to Better Futures. Tess gives Sam an overview of the Better Futures service, which includes what she can and can't do within her role, how they can plan across the 5 Offers and how the service will differ from Sam's experiences of case management.

Tess encourages him to think about who he wants to be, what he wants to do and where he wants to be (in his life). Sam appears closed off when Tess asks him about his plans for transitioning out of residential care, and she detects that he may lack confidence in his basic skills for living independently. He asks Tess if she can get him a house. She is direct and says she doesn't have any houses to give young people but it is something they will work on together.

Tess talks about the Housing and Living Skills Offer and explains that she can work with him to explore housing options and build up his independent living skills so that he is ready to manage his own place when that happens.

They agree to meet fortnightly at the local cafe, that all communications will be via text message, and that they will both reply to each other's texts the same day they are sent. Tess gives Sam her contact details as well as those of the provider, and encourages him to contact her whenever he needs something.

Developing a vision

To develop their vision and identify goals, young people need to explore:

- what is important to them and why
- what they would ideally like to do
- who they want to be without limitations.

Creating a big-picture vision of the young person's life gives them some goals to reach for in the present. Development Coaches invest in building a relationship with the young person and being curious about their aspirations and goals. This enables them to recognise a young person's strengths, talents, potential and motivations.

Young people will determine the level of guidance and support needed from the Development Coach to explore options linked to the Housing and Living Skills Offer. The role of the Development Coach is to hold unconditional belief in young people's aspirations. Focus on working with them to establish the necessary pathways for these to be achieved, and have faith that good things will come of the process regardless of the outcome.

A young person's vision holds valuable information about their interests and aspirations. With the young person's consent, Development Coaches can share this information with Community Connectors who can reference it when considering relevant opportunities and housing and living skills connections.

Exploring and accessing mainstream services and resources, community connections and building their personal and professional networks is an important part of developing young people's supported independence.

Practice example

When Sam and Tess meet again, she brings up the discussion around Sam's vision: who he wants to be, what he wants to do, and where he aspires to be in a few years time. Tess knows that Sam isn't studying or working, so she brings up examples of other young people who are at TAFE, working part-time or participating in social activities in the community to show how she can support his education and employment goals. She listens as Sam describes how living in residential care means he can't always get to school on time, and that after missing so many assessments he believes his apprenticeship teacher doesn't want him back.

Sam says he's not interested in anything right now except finding a place to live. Tess sees that his stress and anxiety about housing are limiting his ability to engage in any of the other Offers at this time. She acknowledges Sam's concerns about homelessness, and that not having a housing pathway would understandably cause great anxiety. Sam becomes emotional and upset and says that he doesn't feel anybody is supporting him to move out of residential care and into his own space.

Tess brings the conversation back to a place of comfort by asking Sam about his friends and what he likes to do.

Sam says he doesn't get out much but that lots of his friends live a few suburbs away. However, he doesn't get to see them as often as he would like to as it takes so long to get there on public transport. Tess offers to talk to the residential care staff about facilitating a day where Sam can go and visit his friends. She offers to organise a travel voucher for him so can get there directly and not spend his limited free time navigating public transport.

Sam warms up to Tess more after her offers of support, and she takes this opportunity to suggest that he updates his care team on the goals they have been discussing. Sam refuses so Tess asks his permission to share his Vision with them and Sam agrees.

Readiness

To establish a better understanding of sequencing and types of housing and living skills opportunities, resources and pathways, young people need:

- to be clear about their education goals, motivations and challenges
- to shape the kind of opportunities they want and self-determine their readiness to engage
- to self-identify the level and type of support that will help them engage and participate.

Young people may not have thought about how to make it easier and more comfortable for themselves. Offer examples that have worked for others and talk about what it could look like for them. Bring strategies to the young person so they feel empowered to make choices about how they interact, engage and participate while they're still exploring options. Reinforce your high belief in them by telling them, 'I know you can apply for this rental, but what support can we put around you to support and give you every chance to succeed?'

Development Coaches should also assess their own readiness to support the young person in where they are at. Be reflective. Determine what the role is and which is the best intervention to close the gap between where the young person is now and where they want to be. This means asking them what their boundaries are and what they need from you, and giving them different examples of the type of support that's available.

The Development Coach may not always have capacity to do this preparatory work with the young person. Involve the Community Connector who can build a relationship with the young person, track and support their readiness and gradually build their capacity to participate.

In the practice example below, a Development Coach could prepare a young person for an art class by asking if they want:

- to get picked up and dropped home after the session
- to come with their Development Coach, Community Connector or friend
- to come to the for ten minutes and just observe
- to come to the whole session but not participate
- to give you a signal when they want to participate

Readiness is not a 'set and forget' but requires consistent attention as the Development Coach and young person work together to decide what's next and where to start.

Practice example

Tess tells Sam there is a care team meeting coming up and asks if he would like her to advocate on his behalf around his transitional housing planning in that meeting. Sam agrees, and Tess asks if he would also like to attend. Sam declines saying he doesn't know what goes on in those meetings and he doesn't feel safe in that space. Tess offers to advocate for an online meeting where Sam can have his camera off and participate as much or as little as he wants, but he is unsure.

Sam wants to talk about his housing situation, so Tess shows him a list of housing options and talks through the requirements, pros and cons of each one. She is upfront about waitlist times and housing availability. Tess also explains the process of getting some assessments ready to share with the care team and other key stakeholders, as this will ensure that Sam has an opportunity to develop basic living skills before transitioning to independent housing. They work through some structured questions and identify that Sam wants to live alone in a private rental, close to public transport, and near his existing social network of friends.

Tess says this is a great goal to work towards and manages Sam's expectations. They look at relevant real estate listings and Sam is disheartened by the price of the rent. They talk about managing money and Tess explains that she can apply for Home Stretch for Sam, which will give him an accommodation allowance to support him with housing costs until he is 21.

Tess also starts a conversation with Mo, the Community Connector, to see what is available in local financial literacy and living skills programs.

Sam and Tess decide to meet weekly to work more intensively on Sam's housing pathway.

Building connections and opportunities

To build connections and opportunities, young people need:

- to recognise their own capabilities
- to have the confidence and motivation to pursue their interests
- to take up opportunities related to their interests
- to be inspired to develop other interests and aspirations.

The Development Coach's role at this stage is to hold high aspirations of the young person and work with them to broker relevant opportunities, support their housing and living skills engagement and fund out-of-pocket expenses for social and community activities and resources. Collaboration with the Community Connector to make these connections is a necessity.

Wherever possible and appropriate, try to engage the young person in those mainstream opportunities and connections that are also accessed by family-connected young people. Often these can be well utilised by care-experienced young people with some additional supports to facilitate access, such as a prior meeting with event organisers or being allowed to bring along a support person.

The young person will have identified the type and level of support they want from the Development Coach, so they can plan opportunities and support strategies together that will build their confidence to turn up and give things a go. This planning can also involve external people associated with the opportunities or activities who can clarify what the young person can expect and what is expected of them when they attend.

The onus to make connections and opportunities a reality lies with the Development Coach. Consider the young person's readiness and take steps to build confidence and safety. Success is largely due to good preparation such as:

- mapping their interests accurately so that they see the benefit in attending
- working with the Community Connector to link into opportunities
- ensuring networks and housing and living skills connections are suitable and youth friendly
- identifying and addressing underlying barriers to participation
- being deliberate in how you offer opportunities
- motivating young people to attend opportunities and celebrate when they make it
- checking in with the young person about attending the opportunity a few days before, the night before and the morning of
- checking in afterwards to see how they went and what else they might need for next time.

Practice example

Tess and Mo, the Community Connector, have been meeting online to discuss how best to support Sam in building his readiness to live independently. Mo gives Tess information about three different local everyday life skills programs that can also assist Sam to get his 100 points of ID.

Tess brings this information to Sam as part of the Housing and Living Skills Offer. She works with him to alleviate some of his anxiety around attending the workshop session. Tess answers all of Sam's questions and gives him information about who is running the program, what will happen in the session, who else will be there and different ways he can participate, when he feels ready to. Sam asks if he can bring a friend and Tess agrees this is a great idea to make Sam feel more comfortable about attending.

Tess gives Sam an update on the housing applications she has submitted and when they can expect to hear back. Sam says he's thinking about moving out into the share-house his friends have. Tess works with Sam to think through the timing and logistics of this move and details what funding and assistance he can access. Tess supports Sam to develop a clear plan around this and offers to help him present it to his care team at the next meeting. Sam says he isn't comfortable to do that but he will attend and listen in via Tess' computer.

Tess has some reservations about how Sam will go living in another shared housing arrangement. She brings this up gently with Sam, while still supporting the idea as a viable option, and offers him support to link in with a mental health professional so he has support lined up if and when he needs it. They agree to explore this further next time.

Reflecting on distance travelled

At this stage, the young person can be actively using and building community connections and networks, with the Development Coach encouraging inquiry, reflection and sustaining progress of their goals.

> ***Community Connections can support with reflection and celebrating achievements. At intake we take a photo of their goals. Then at the end of their time with us, we give them their 'Book of Wins', which is a visual record of what they have done and achieved.***
>
> — Community Connector

Here the Development Coach will act as a supportive adult: sometimes as a sounding board for frustrations or difficulties, and at other times by providing insights or advice. Together with the Development Coach, the young person can review and reflect on how far they have come and what they would like to do next.

> ***It's always good to find out why a young person drops off, and what is going on for them. We need open communication with the Development Coach so we can change and adapt for what the young person needs.***
>
> — Community Connector

We want the young person to feel seen and heard and to walk away knowing they can rely on accessing the service when they need it.

Practice example

Sam and Tess meet again to reflect on the life changes he has been navigating over the last few months. Tess celebrates the fact that Sam made it to the financial literacy and living skills workshops, and that he was able to obtain his 100 points of ID. Sam says he was happy to get his ID sorted out and that he got along well with the financial literacy facilitator.

Tess supports Sam to reflect on some of the challenges he has experienced since moving into the share house, like paying bills on time and living with friends. They identify new goals, including engaging in further living skills workshops to build his confidence and finding a place where Sam can live by himself.

Tess takes this opportunity to update Sam's Vision and reflect it back to him. He says his life still feels unstable but he recognises his network of supports and has started showing more interest in talking about education, training and employment opportunities.

We can support with reflection and celebrating achievements. At intake, we take a photo of their goals and add a comment about what they have achieved. At the end of their time with us, we give them a binder for their 'Book of Wins', a visual record of what they have done and achieved.

— Community Connector

Practice challenges

Working in a challenging housing market

Securing safe and affordable accommodation that aligns well with the needs of care-experienced young people can be a challenging task. There are no simple solutions. To help navigate the current housing climate in Victoria, Better Futures Development Coaches offer the following guidance.

Issues Development Coaches can influence:

- working proactively with care teams to ensure appropriate supports are put in place as a young person transitions to adulthood
- the delivery of housing and living skills workshops to educate young people on their choices, to develop their skills and to foster interpersonal relationships with their peers
- developing short-, medium- and long-term goals led by the young people themselves
- providing opportunities for young people to develop a vision for their future
- advocating to Child Protection and other services involved with young people to ensure continuity of care and the development of a robust transition plan
- introducing young people to the CREATE Foundation and the opportunities to advocate for change in this space
- adding Community Connections as a standing agenda item at team meetings
- using flexible funding opportunities creatively
- doing myth busting work with young people to foster a transparent picture of the housing landscape.

Issues Better Futures Service can influence:

A number of Better Futures providers are taking a broader, collaborative approach to housing options. For example, a Community Connector at Anglicare Bendigo has been piloting a Better Futures Housing Alliance with some of Bendigo's real estate agencies. In the short time since forming the Alliance, members have built new relationships with local housing stakeholders, and been able to place nine young people in different accommodation settings.

This innovative and collaborative practice has potential to be replicated by Better Futures providers from other areas across the state.

Issues Development Coaches can control:

- how they work with Community Connectors, young people and external stakeholders using an Advantaged Thinking and coaching approach
- the resources they need to support skill development and goal setting, including the My Vision planning tools and the Everyday Life Skills tool
- increasing understanding and awareness of the local services available to young people to harness community effort e.g., developing relationships and partnerships with local housing services, providers and real estate agencies
- making use of The Deal to set up a relationship with Better Futures based on mutual contribution and clear expectations from both sides
- investing in their own wellbeing and self-care
- focusing on time management and prioritising building and sustaining community connections and networks.

Early intervention and appropriate planning to meet young people where they are at are essential factors for ensuring that Development Coaches are setting young people up for success, and enabling them to thrive as they transition to adulthood.

Where to start – housing and living skills readiness

Some providers may use resources that assess a young person's abilities in, and knowledge about, living skills – e.g., budgeting, household management, communication, self-care – to work out their readiness for independent living.

However, any personal evaluation needs to be guided by the Development Coach so that young people are evaluating themselves. This practice helps Better Futures practitioners to understand young people's specific motivations, challenges and capabilities so they can provide them with the kind of options for which they are ready. They will then be able to support young people to make decisions for themselves based on their own priorities and interests.

Some common topics and opportunities around which young people can build their skills and knowledge include:

- **Independent living skills** – budgeting, cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene, time and household management
- **Tenancy readiness** – understanding lease agreements, rights and responsibilities as a tenant, maintenance and repairs, communication with landlords, conflict resolution
- **Financial literacy** – budgeting, income management, bill payment and saving strategies.

Coaching conversations in which the young person reflects on where they are at allow Development Coaches to gain insights into young people's strengths and areas for improvement. They can also help determine the level of support and assistance a young person might need to transition successfully to independent living. This deeper understanding of the young person's needs enables Better Futures practitioners to tailor their interventions, provide targeted coaching, and offer specific skill-building opportunities that will enhance readiness for independent living.

During your coaching conversations, incorporate structured questions that lift young people's voices and preferences, and give them an opportunity to have input into their housing options. For example:

- Do you like living with people or do you prefer to be alone?
- If you need to be close to work, study or family, where would it suit you best to live?
- How much can you afford week-to-week for rent and other costs?
- Do you have pets?
- Will you be able to mow lawns and look after a garden?
- How will you get around? Do you need public transport? Do you need to be able to walk to shops?
- Do you have family, friends or co-workers who might be willing to share accommodation? Who are they?
- Do you get support from any services which might be able to help with housing? Are there any programs you can access for support?

By listening to the young person, identifying their skills and knowledge gaps and addressing these proactively, Better Futures practitioners will be doing their best to adequately prepare them for managing the challenges of independent living in safe and sustainable housing in Victoria.

Securing private rentals

Better Futures practitioners have found success by advocating with local real estate agencies for sustainable housing opportunities for young people. They have fostered trust and understanding with these stakeholders by actively engaging with them, understanding their needs, providing information about what Better Futures can offer and explaining the funding attached to the Home Stretch program.

This approach can establish a positive working relationship with external stakeholders, and an opportunity to enter a more formalised arrangement down the track.

A Development Coach from Berry Street reflects on how they have campaigned for young people's housing in Shepparton.

> ***We've been developing relationships in the Shepparton area in the private rental market. Our success has been due to knowing who the property managers are – we have to keep across the big turnover of staff. Making regular visits and having a coffee have gone a long way to forming strong relationships.***
>
> ***Initially, we started with general advocacy for young people. We then pushed it as a business opportunity for the real estate agent to be involved and explained the support of Better Futures and the financial security with the funding available.***
>
> ***Berry Street has been allowed as head leaseholder, which also gave the real estate agent confidence. They now have four shared properties with that agent. Reporting any damage or issues in advance of housing inspections has been an important aspect in maintaining communication with the property managers.***
>
> ***Ideally, we would like to have relationships with all agents in Shepparton but that is not really possible. Developing key local connections and relationships are more important than casting a broad net.***
>
> — Development Coach

Better Futures practitioners' work in advocacy should also be supported by delivering activities to young people that will set them up for success in their independent living. This could include providing:

- life and living skills workshops to build their capability for independent living
- budgeting skills around the young person's income to find sustainably affordable private housing
- details of the young person's rights as a tenant and what contracts mean
- information about real estate agents' tenant selection process for private rentals
- information about safety awareness and safety in the home
- workshops with real estate agents on ways to secure housing using flexible funding.

By campaigning for care-experienced young people's housing opportunities, Better Futures practitioners can reduce bias and mitigate the discrimination that these young people often encounter when searching for rental housing.

Delivering successful skill-building sessions

Engaging young people to attend in-person or online events or activities can be challenging. Here are some key points to consider when setting up an activity:

- ensure the idea for the event or activity has come from young people
- schedule the session at a time when young people will be able to attend
- cap the number of attendees to keep the session small and intimate
- share information beforehand on what the session is about and who will be presenting
- offer a variety of online and in-person events to increase accessibility
- provide support to access the session if it's an in-person event
- make time for breaks and provide something to eat during the session
- cast a broad net and share information with all Better Futures young people, the Better Futures community and the broader community so as to encourage attendance
- reach out to young people who have transitioned to independence and are thriving. Ask them to present on a topic or speak to young people about life skills
- co-design the session, the speakers and the content with Better Futures young people

Better Futures practitioners can collaborate across teams and regions to identify the shared needs of the young people they support. Before developing activities and programs from scratch, consult community stakeholders such as neighbourhood houses, Local Learning and Employment Networks, youth services, local councils, and other service providers to explore their existing offerings. By leveraging the resources available from these stakeholders, Better Futures providers can potentially adapt or co-design similar activities with the support of local partners.

How can I encourage the young person to direct their planning?

Consider giving the young person a checklist of key activities that they can take inspiration from and work towards.

CREATE's Go Your Own Way guide has created this checklist of things that young people can consider when planning across the Housing and Living Skills Offer:

Identity

- [ ] Do I have my birth certificate?
- [ ] Do I have a Health Care card? Do I have a Medicare card?
- [ ] Do I have a Student/Concession card?
- [ ] Do I have a copy of my vaccination and medical records?
- [ ] What constitutes 100 points of ID and do I have access to these documents?
- [ ] Do I have a copy of my academic records or certificates?
- [ ] Do I have my proof of my Aboriginality?
- [ ] Do I have personal photos and my life story?
- [ ] Do I know how to contact my family members?
- [ ] Do I know how to connect with my cultural community?
- [ ] Do I have a genogram or family map of who is who in my family?
- [ ] Do I know how to access my case file?

Legal rights and responsibilities

- [ ] Am I enrolled to vote?
- [ ] Do I know what my rights are?
- [ ] Do I know where to find information about the law?
- [ ] Do I know how to get legal advice or assistance if I need to?
- [ ] Do I know where to go to if I want to make a complaint?
- [ ] Do I know what the National Redress Scheme is and how to access it?

A place to live

- [ ] Have I had a discussion with my carer or worker about whether I can stay where I am living now?
- [ ] Do I know where I want to live?
- [ ] Is it close to public transport?
- [ ] Do I want to live in shared accommodation with other people?
- [ ] Do I know what furniture I will need, and where to get these things?
- [ ] Do I know how to budget for paying rent on time?
- [ ] Do I have enough money for the bond and 2 weeks rent?
- [ ] Do I know about rental agreements and tenancy laws?
- [ ] Is my name on the public housing/social housing list?

Money

- [ ] Do I know what TILA is and how to apply for it?
- [ ] Do I know how to apply for Centrelink benefits?
- [ ] Do I have a bank account?
- [ ] Do I know how to use an ATM and EFTPOS?
- [ ] Do I know how to make a budget?
- [ ] Do I know how to stick to my budget, so I have enough money to pay for things like rent and food?
- [ ] Do I know where to go for help if I have problems with managing my money?

Life skills

- [ ] Do I know where to get help in an emergency (e.g., friends, family police)?
- [ ] Do I know which aftercare service I can go to for support?
- [ ] Do I know how to do grocery shopping?
- [ ] Do I know how to prepare a simple meal?
- [ ] Do I know how to use a washing machine, clothes dryer and iron?
- [ ] Do I know how to keep my home clean and tidy?
- [ ] Do I know how to use public transport and read timetables?
- [ ] Do I know how to treat minor injuries, cuts, burns?
- [ ] Do I know how to apply for my driver's licence?
- [ ] Do I know who to turn to for support?

Housing and living skills and capability-building for young people

The Housing and Living Skills Offer provides access to housing options, develops living skills that are relevant to a young person's goals and aspirations, and provides them with the necessary resources and skills to allow them to unlock their potential and transition towards independence.

These opportunities can include the development of skills to maintain a healthy mind, body and home, and the effective application of practical skills, knowledge and abilities in real-life situations.

Examples of these skills and topics to explore include:

- cooking, cleaning, shopping, organisation and planning
- budgeting, paying bills, bank accounts, financial assistance, borrowing and debt, credit cards, shopping
- personal hygiene, nutrition, movement and exercise, healthy lifestyles and habits, taking medication, making medical appointments, filling a script
- maintaining a property, rights and obligations as a tenant, tenancy contacts, reporting damage and requesting repairs, communicating with the real estate agency/landlord
- knowing your rights, dealing with fines, going to court, reporting a crime, making a complaint, victim support, enrolling to vote
- navigating and accessing housing and other youth services in the community; navigating and accessing online information and tools like My Gov, Vicroads, Centrelink
- getting 100 points of personal identification, getting a Medicare card, Health Care card, debit card, passport
- getting a Myki card and keeping it topped up, getting a drivers license, buying a car, road safety, car insurance.

These skills can be developed, enhanced and supported through a broad range of methods tailored to the young person's situation, needs and goals. Development Coaches can facilitate:

- one-on-one sessions with the young person
- group work sessions with other young people
- experiential and practical learning
- peer-led initiatives
- connecting with mentors
- incursions or excursions coordinated by the Community Connector that leverage specialists from other services or the broader community.

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

Quick links to operations information:

- Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework
- Home Stretch fact sheet
- Eligibility and referral
- Allocation and prioritisation
- Roles and responsibilities

Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers

The Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP) is a client information and case management system. CRISSP provides a range of functions to record information, such as a young person's:

- personal details
- goals and activities they have undertaken across the 5 Offers
- strengths and aspirations as linked to a goal
- relationship with the Community Connector
- number of hours spent working with Better Futures practitioners
- flexible funding and other funding sources balance.

CRISSP also enabled electronic reporting of data required by the DFFH. Funded Better Futures providers can extract the following reports from CRISSP:

- Better Futures Monthly Report CP504R
- Client Expenditure Report CP506R

For more information on using CRISSP and reporting, see Better Futures performance and reporting practice advice.

Outcomes Tracking System

The Outcomes Tracking System is a data collection tool used to collect responses to Better Futures and Home Stretch outcomes questions, which cover topics across the 5 Offers.

Outcomes questions are voluntary, with responses to come from the young person's perspective. They are completed once in care, then annually at the start of post care, and again at a young person's transition from care services.

The outcomes questions are to be completed as part of planning discussion between the young person and their Development Coach. There are a couple of reports which the Development Coach can share with the young person to track change over time.

Better Futures flexible funding

Better Futures flexible funding is available to young people, including those accessing Home Stretch (which has its own flexible funding allocation). Funding is used to assist with young people's expenses for education, employment, health (where not covered by Medicare), and activities that support the achievement of their goals and assist their transition to sustainable independent living. There are many things flexible funding can be used for, and Development Coaches are encouraged to think creatively to ensure the services, activities and items funded meet the young person's needs.

Better Futures practitioners' support, and associated flexible funding, may gradually reduce over time, if appropriate. For example, a young person may be receiving flexible funding as a contribution towards payment of their utility bills, and this contribution may gradually decrease as the young person's capacity to cover these costs increases. It is important that consideration be given to the sustainability of arrangements beyond a young person's 21st birthday when Better Futures support ends.

The amount of flexible funding a young person can access is based on their support needs.

Flexible funding should only be utilised once all other appropriate funding options have been exhausted, including: Child Protection/ACAC funding; Caregiver payments; TILA; Total Care Package, etc.

For more information on items funded and administrative processes, see:

- Better Futures flexible funding practice advice
- Better Futures flexible funding request form

Home Stretch procedure

Note: Homestretch Proposals and Applications can only be completed by contracted case managers and Child Protection, not Better Futures practitioners.

The Home Stretch application form (CRIS/CRISSP) must be submitted by the Child Protection case manager, contracted case manager, or the ACAC case manager. The Better Futures practitioner must support applications, as they will be rejected if they or a Better Futures provider have not been involved in the decision to apply for Home Stretch.

For more information:

- Home Stretch advice
- Home Stretch website for eligibility criteria details
- Home Stretch CRIS guide for details about the CRIS Home Stretch application process – accessible in CRIS via the 4 Help! Ask CRIS icon.

Transition to Independent Living Allowance

TILA is a one-off payment from the Australian Government to help young people who are leaving formal care arrangements. It provides a contribution of up to $1,500 towards the costs involved in moving to independent living.

Young people aged between 15 and 25 years are able to access this allowance for a range of support services as well as training and educational materials and other items such as furniture and white goods.

The payment is available either as a lump sum or in up to six installments as agreed between the young person and their case worker. It is paid by the Australian Government's Department of Human Services.

For more information see:

- TILA – Guide for caseworkers
- TILA website.

Transitional Housing Management

The Transitional Housing Management (THM) program provides accommodation for up to 12 months (18 months for young people) to those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Funded by the National Affordable Housing Agreement, the program provides property and tenancy management, initial assessment and planning, housing information, referral to other homelessness and allied services, housing advocacy and financial assistance.

There are 19 THM program-funded organisations based in homelessness support services throughout Victoria.

Leaving Care Housing and Support Initiative

This initiative provides support to young people still on a care order when they are preparing to leave care, and identified as being at risk of homelessness. Service support provides them with limited access to THM properties, assists with living skills, and facilitates connections to move towards independent living. Referrals are made through Better Futures providers.

Referral to Community Connector

When a young person and the Better Futures practitioner identify that Community Connections support would be useful, a referral is made. The Community Connector then matches a young person to a mentor or facilitates a connection to a community service, resource or opportunity.

Community Connections referrals can be made when:

- a young person would like to be matched with a mentor (either one-to-one or group mentoring)
- a young person would like to be connected to a community service or resource and the Community Connector is needed to facilitate this connection.

All referrals, both for young people in care and post care, must come from the Better Futures practitioner. Referrals can be made when a young person is between 15 years 9 months and 21 years of age.

The Better Futures practitioner takes the following steps in the referral process:

- discusses a Community Connections referral with the young person, and obtains their consent to the referral
- sends a CRIS/SP referral to the relevant Community Connections provider, and attaches all relevant documentation (for example, the 15+ Care and Transition Plan and Cultural Plan)
- shares any other relevant information with the Community Connections provider including security alerts or safety risks.

For more information see:

- Information on the Better Futures CRISSP referral and allocation process
- Community Connections practice advice
- Better Futures Connections Offer Practice Guide

OTHER HOUSING AND LIVING SKILLS RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

Better Futures practitioners don't need to be experts in every area, but do need to be well connected, and know where to go, and what actions need to be put in place, to support young people.

A range of these supports are stepped out in the following table.

Housing and living skills supports, programs and funding sources matrix

	Individual support	Build readiness	Explore options	Opportunities and connections	For young people	For Better Futures practitioners	Funding information	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people	Young people with disability
Sortli app		●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Housing									
Kids Under Cover	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
A place to live (Create Your Future)					●				
Advice for Life: Housing (Youth Central)					●				
Housing (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)					●				
How to apply for government housing (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)					●				
Lead tenant information						●			
Head leasing information									
Youth Foyer Locations & Referrals						●			
Housing Vic public housing movable units						●	●		
Housing Vic social housing	●					●	●		
Housing Vic community housing	●					●	●		
Housing Vic public housing	●					●	●		
List of all registered housing agencies in Victoria			●			●			
Aboriginal Housing Victoria						●	●	●	
Financial assistance									
National Debt Helpline	●				●	●			
Mob Strong Debt Helpline	●				●	●		●	
Saver Plus	●	●	●	●	●		●		
Private Rental Assistance Program	●					●	●		
Centrelink rent assistance and bond loans	●				●	●	●		
No interest loans (Good Shepherd)	●				●	●	●		

	Individual support	Build readiness	Explore options	Opportunities and connections	For young people	For Better Futures practitioners	Funding information	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people	Young people with disability
Find a financial counsellor (Money Smart, ASIC)	●				●	●			
Advice for Life: Getting financial help (Youth Central)					●		●		
Transport									
Advice for Life: Driving and public transport (Youth Central)					●				
Getting your Ls and Ps (Create Your Future)					●				
Transport (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)					●				
Public transport (Create Your Future)					●				
Your own wheels (Create Your Future)					●				
Car share (Create Your Future)			●		●				
Managing money									
Money (Create Your Future)		●			●				
Sortli budget planner		●	●		●				
Money Smart budget planner		●	●		●				
Money (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)		●			●				
Finances (Youth Central)		●			●				
Money Smart (ASIC)		●	●		●				
Living skills									
Advice for Life: Staying safe (Youth Central)		●			●				
Advice for Life: Health (Youth Central)		●			●				
Health and welllbeing (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)		●			●				
How to maintain my rental property (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)		●			●				
Food relief									
DSS Grants Service Directory – Food relief						●	●		
Neighbourhood house community pantries (Find a neighbourhood house)				●	●	●			
Emergency relief									
Frontyard	●				●	●			
Centrelink Financial Information Service	●				●	●			
Homelessness access points	●					●			
DSS Grants Service Directory – Emergency relief						●			
How to get emergency and crisis accommodation (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)					●				

	Individual support	Build readiness	Explore options	Opportunities and connections	For young people	For Better Futures practitioners	Funding information	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people	Young people with disability
Legal									
Legal (Create Your Future)		●			●				
Advice for Life: Know your rights (Youth Central)		●			●				
LegalPod	●		●	●	●	●			
Legal (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)					●				
Youth law	●		●		●				
How to get ID (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)		●			●				
Connections									
CREATE Foundation		●		●	●				
Neighbourhood houses		●	●	●	●				
Kinship Finding program (VACCA)	●			●	●			●	
Births Deaths and Marriages Victoria					●	●			
Relationships									
Family Relationship Centres	●	●	●	●	●	●			
Relationships Victoria	●	●	●	●	●	●			
Our Watch: The Line					●				
ReachOut: Relationships			●		●				
Relationships (Create Your Future)			●		●				
Relationships (Wombat Everyday Living Resources)			●		●				
Advice for Life: Family and relationships (Youth Central)			●		●				
Intersectionality									
Proof of Aboriginality					●	●			
Centre for Multicultural Youth		●	●	●	●				
NDIS homepage									
Youth Disability Advocacy Service	●			●	●	●			
Youth Affairs Council of Victoria	●			●	●	●			
Victorian Pride Centre					●	●			
Switchboard (LGBTIQA+)					●	●			
Rainbow Network					●	●			
Minus18					●	●			
Transcend Australia					●	●			

	Individual support	Build readiness	Explore options	Opportunities and connections	For young people	For Better Futures practitioners	Funding information	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people	Young people with disability
Funding information									
TILA	●			●		●	●		
Better Future flexible funding	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Home Stretch	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
DFFH									
Better Futures						●	●		
Home Stretch						●	●		
Leaving Care website						●			
Melbourne City Mission Leaving Care Hotline	●		●	●	●		●	●	●

i Commission for Children and Young People, Keep Caring: Systemic inquiry into services for young people transitioning from out-of-home care (Melbourne: Commission for Children and Young People, 2020), p. 13.

www.bsl.org.au/services/youth/better-futures