

TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE

MONTH November
2015

→ ALL ABOARD FOR THE NEXT STEP ←



WHAT IS TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE MONTH?

Each year, more than 500 young people leave the Queensland child protection system to live independently. Help and support for these young people often comes from family, carers and community members, as well as government and non-government service providers. However, a number of young people make this transition without the support of a family network.

Transition to Independence Month (t2i Month) is held in November each year to focus on helping young people make the journey from the child protection system to independence and achieve positive life outcomes.

This year's theme *All aboard for the next step... navigating post care* aims to raise awareness of the new Next Step After Care services and the importance of young people having people in their life on board for their journey to independence.

Research by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, indicates that the most common living arrangement for 20–24 year olds is in their family home¹. For most young people, they have a place to return to and people who support them. For some young people with a care experience, they may not have the support needed to live independently in a safe and stable way.

As a sector and community, we need to work together and help young people make the journey to adulthood, when they need us. We need a whole-of-system approach to supporting young people to transition to independence.

Legislation and policy at both state and federal levels highlight the critical importance of supporting young people transitioning from the care system. The *Child Protection Act 1999*, under the Charter of Rights, states that young people are entitled to receive appropriate help with their transition from being a child in care to independence. This includes help with housing, access to income support, training and education.

The Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry Final Report noted that special attention is needed for young people with complex needs, such as a physical or intellectual disability or mental health issues, to promote positive social outcomes and reduce disadvantage experienced.

KEY MESSAGES FOR T2I MONTH

Young people need to be in the driver's seat when planning their transition

After all, it's their life! However, they will need support from time to time, like any young person in the community. They will need 'backseat drivers' and 'passengers' to help them navigate the many different roads and to read the signs. Essentially, they need support and guidance (when they ask for it) about which direction to take.

Feedback from young people shows that they feel more secure and confident to face the challenges of growing up with the support of their transition team. The transition team should be led by the young person, and promote the belief of the out-of-home care sector and the community that supporting these young people is a shared responsibility.

"I want support to make the big choices but I don't want people making them for me"

(Jess, 17 years)

Shared responsibility for the long haul

All young people need help with setting themselves up to live as independent adults, including finding safe affordable housing, accessing health services, education and training, and receiving emotional support. Our sector and community have a role to play in working together to provide positive life-long outcomes.

The key message for Child Protection Week is *Child protection is everyone's business*. The responsibility lies with adults in keeping children safe from harm. All members of society need to play a part in ensuring children are nurtured and safe.

TRANSITION TO INDEPENDENCE MONTH November 2015



ALL ABOARD FOR THE NEXT STEP

When young people leave statutory care and begin their transition to independence, it's everyone's business, and action is required across all levels of government and the community.

"You can't have a future without a team of people to help!" (Ben, 21 years)

Let's level the playing field

Let's level the playing field and ensure young people transitioning from care have access to the same support as those in the general community.

They say 'it takes a village to raise a child', and for a typical young person growing up, they have access to a network of support.

For young people leaving care, and who may not have a network of support, we need to be conscious of their needs and of feeling alone.

We need to come together as a village, to ensure our young people leaving care have the same positive experiences as other young people in the general community.

"I'd like to see a world where ALL young people with a care experience are given the same opportunities and support as other young people growing into adults"

(Hayley, 22 years).

WHAT IS NEXT STEP AFTER CARE?

Next Step After Care was launched in April 2015 to provide support to young people leaving care, and is funded by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Next Step was established as part of the Queensland Government's response to the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry Report, which recommended that every young person leaving care be provided with a continuum of transition from care services, including transition planning, post-care support, case management and priority access to education, health, disability services and housing services.

Transition to Independence Month is coordinated by G-Force, a sector-wide working party made up of government and nongovernment organisations including: Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services; CREATE Foundation; Foster Care Queensland; PeakCare; Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak; Youth Advocacy Centre; Department of Housing and Public Works; Life Without Barriers; Office of the Public Guardian and Career Keys.

'Approval was done really fast — in days, not weeks' (Jake, 19 years)

'It's the first time I've been able to call a place my own' (Matthew, 20 years)

'They helped with big things and small things — one time they even bought me groceries'
(Sonia, 19 years)

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED WITH T2I MONTH?

- Hold a workshop or staff meeting to discuss good practice and new ideas for helping young people successfully transition to independence.
- Plan a training session, workshop or forum to hear from local young people about their view of transitioning to independence and how we can improve our practice in supporting them on their journey.
- Organise your own local event for young people to celebrate their achievements in becoming independent.
- Coordinate an art exhibition featuring works from young people.
- Hold a fun group activity with young people (for example, paddle boarding or go-karting) where you can talk about the challenges and opportunities of transitioning to independence.
- Organise a t2i expo where local service providers showcase the help they can provide to young people.

PROMOTIONAL RESOURCES

Download t2i Month promotional resources from CREATE Foundation website

www.createyourfuture.org.au/leaving-care

To register your event, please contact:

Priya Singh, CREATE Foundation

Tel: (07) 3317 6020

Email: priya.singh@create.org.au

1. *Home and away: the living arrangements of young people.* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009)

