

Supported Out-of-Home Care Placement to 21 in QLD

Perspectives of Young People with a Care Experience.

“Eighteen is not a good age for young people with leaving school, and it is unreasonable to expect young people to find a job and live by themselves ... Leaving the comfort of a household and roof over your head at 18 takes away young people’s stability when they need it most.” (Female, 17)

CREATE Foundation

A: 15 Lever Street

Albion, QLD 4010

T: 07 3317 6020

E: gld@create.org.au

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Project Team

- Rachael Donovan (Queensland State Coordinator, CREATE Foundation)
- Andrew Foley (Community Facilitator, CREATE Foundation)
- Amy Jasper (Community Facilitator, CREATE Foundation)
- Hope Flentjar (Youth Facilitator, CREATE Foundation)
- Jana Ventura (Research Officer, CREATE Foundation)
- Dr Joseph J. McDowall (Executive Director [Research], CREATE Foundation)



Executive Summary

In Australia, approximately 56% of young men and 54% of young women aged 18 to 29 are still living with one or more parents (Wilkins et al., 2019). Unfortunately, many young people with an out-of-home care (OOHC) experience have to leave the support and stability of a placement when they turn 18. This leaves them more vulnerable to poor life outcomes such as homelessness, mental health issues, substance abuse, and engagement with the criminal justice system, whilst also being unlikely to pursue post-school education or to be employed (Stein, 2019).

It is vital that the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW), sector professionals, workers, carers, and service providers listen directly to young people in order to address the problems they face to improve their life outcomes. The findings of this consultation present the perspectives of 42 young people with an OOHC experience about the topic of being supported in a placement until they turn 21 years. CREATE conducted interviews with young people face-to-face and by phone.

The majority of participants felt that care-experienced young people should have the option to receive continued supported placement until at least 21 years of age. These flexible supported placement options should be funded by DCSYW and be available to all young people with a care experience irrespective of the placement type they lived in while in care (i.e., foster care, kinship care, residential care, semi-independent and non-approved placements).

Young people expressed diverse needs in regards to transition planning and post-care support. This highlights the need for individualised support with young people's participation at the centre of decision-making. Although this requirement is already embedded in policy, measures must be taken to ensure that young people's involvement actually occurs at a practice level.

Young people who choose to return to live with their birth family when they turn 18 can face extra challenges due to family disconnection. These young people require additional supports during transition planning including assistance in establishing strong support networks, contingency plans and safety measures. Likewise, birth families should receive support to develop their caring capacity if young people want to return to them (Healy, 2019).

Within the transition to adulthood space, there are significant changes taking place in the Queensland child protection sector such as *Next Step Plus* and extending foster care payment for carers with young people up to the age of 19. Nevertheless, for young people transitioning into adulthood from statutory care, even the best programs, pathway planning, and support services do not provide the security and stability of a home. It is important that we continue to listen to young people with a care experience and include them in genuine partnerships as we respond to their vital transition support and placement needs.



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Background

In Queensland, young people currently transition from the care system at the age of 18 with some provisions for selected young people up to the age of 19¹. There is a vast body of literature documenting the multitude of poor life outcomes such as lower educational attainment, employment rates and criminal justice interactions experienced by a high proportion of care leavers (Courtney & Hook, 2017; Courtney et al., 2018; Mendes et al., 2011). These young people are particularly disadvantaged in accessing the same social, educational, housing, and employment opportunities that other young people access with the support of their families and close social support networks.

The *Transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care: Independence or interdependence?* report by McDowall (2020) highlights that 30% of young people experience homelessness in the first year after leaving out-of-home care (OOHC) at age 18. Young people in care are two to three times more likely to be pregnant and become young parents compared to their non-care peers (Radey et al., 2016), and are increasingly vulnerable to having poorer mental health outcomes (Muir et al., 2019).

Extending the provision of supported placements for young people in care up to the age of 21 will help improve these outcomes. In this report, we define supported placement as an arrangement to have a safe and secure place to live, possibly in the carer household where they lived before turning 18, which is accompanied by access to a variety of support services. Authors such as Courtney et al. (2017) and Munro et al. (2012) have shown that extending the age of care to 21 has a positive impact upon education and employment outcomes; as well as decreased alcohol and drug dependency, reduced homelessness, and fewer interactions with the justice system.

Across Australia many jurisdictions are exploring the option of extending supported placements to 21. The Tasmanian government (2018) have extended carer payments to provide support to young people in care until 21. The South Australian government introduced a *Stability in Family-Based Care* program in 2019 which has been accessed by 50 young people and has shown early signs of success (Department for Child Protection, 2020). The Australian Capital Territory have support until 21 in legislation, however, it is not an entitlement and its implementation is at the discretion of the government with only selected young people able to receive this extended support. In Queensland, young people can stay until 19 in some circumstances, however, there are currently no commitments to extend supported placements to 21 (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2019). The DCSYW currently commission services such as *Next Step Plus*, which will provide some support for young people with a care experience until 25.

Trials for increasing supported placements for young people up to 21 have also commenced in Western Australia (Government of Western Australia, 2019) and in Victoria (Premier of Victoria, 2018). However, there is a lack of commitment by the New South Wales government despite the obvious need for supported placements until 21 and advocacy efforts by Uniting Care (Uniting, 2019).

The Present Consultation

This consultation was conducted by the CREATE Foundation to hear directly from young people aged 15 to 18, who are in the process of transitioning from care to adulthood. It focused on identifying their anticipated transitional needs as they leave care and their views on supported placements to 21. It also sought to hear the reflections of young people who have already transitioned from care regarding their support needs. In particular, the following topics were explored:

- Transitioning from care plans;

¹ Carer payment is provided for young people (in foster or kinship care only) who are enrolled in school up to 19. DCSYW have also committed to providing carer payments for young people (in foster or kinship care only) up to 19 from 2020.

- confidence to live independently;
- supported placements up to 21 and support needs;
- housing, education, study, and employment trajectories for leaving care at 18 compared to at 21.

The main aim of this consultation was to find out whether young people believed extending supported placements to 21 years would be beneficial in improving their life outcomes and what supports were most important in facilitating them through the transition process.

Method

Participants

A total of 42 young people aged 15 to 18 years with an OOHC experience participated in the consultation. The demographics of the sample are shown in Table 1. Within the participant group, there were 28 females, 13 males and one non-binary person. The majority had been in care for more than two years, 12 were currently in residential care and almost half (20/42) identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Four participants identified as “Other cultural group.” These included Brazilian, Chinese-Australian, Filipino-Australian and Pacific Islander. Seven young people identified as having a disability, with six reporting they received support for their condition. The types of support consisted of specialist health care, counselling services and extra assistance at school and for housing.

Materials

This consultation survey consisted of 29 questions, which can be found in Appendix A. These questions included a range of basic demographic questions, binary and multiple choice questions, rating scales, short answer responses, and open-ended questions for young people to provide more detailed reflections. Quotes of participants were transcribed verbatim to retain the authenticity and integrity of this consultation.

The consultation questions focussed on participants’ experiences in relation to transition planning, their confidence and preparedness to live independently at 18, perceptions on having the option to extend supported placements until 21, the benefits and challenges that remaining in a placement may bring, and other supports that would be useful. Participants also were asked to predict how likely they would be to have completed secondary education, obtained suitable housing, and achieved their goals for further study, training, or employment based on two situations – remaining with a carer beyond 18, or living independently. Young people living at a residential care facility were also asked to indicate who had spoken to them about future living arrangements once they turn 18. To conclude the survey, young people were given the opportunity to add anything that they felt was important in relation to having placement support until 21 years old.

Procedure

This consultation was conducted between November 2019 and March 2020. Participant recruitment was promoted through the *clubCREATE* magazine, through CREATE’s network of stakeholders in Queensland, and *clubCREATE* members. *ClubCREATE* members were contacted directly by telephone, email, and social media. A consultation promotional flyer is shown in Appendix B. Other opportunities such as at CREATE Youth Advisory Group meetings were also provided to maximise participation from a range of regions.

Ethics, Confidentiality and Informed Consent

The consultation was conducted in accordance with the CREATE Consultation with Children and Young People and Disclosure Policies. Before the consultation, young people were provided with the standard CREATE Participant Information Sheet detailing the purpose and nature of the consultation (see Appendix C). Those completing the consultation online were given a link to the Participant Information Sheet on CREATE’s website. Informed consent was sought from young people as well as their carers,

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Demographics	Number of Young People
Age	
15	10
16	13
17	11
18	7
No age disclosed	1
Sex	
Male	13
Female	28
Non-Binary	1
Culture	
Aboriginal	16
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	4
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse	4
No Special Group	18
Placement Type ²	
Foster Care	12
Kinship Care	7
Permanent Care	1
Residential Care	12
Reunified	1
Independent Living (no longer in care)	4
Non-approved placement	4
Living with carer (post-care)	1
Region	
Central Queensland	9
North Queensland	12
South East Queensland	11
South West Queensland	10
Disability	
Yes	7
No	32
Prefer not to say	3

caseworkers, or Child Safety Officers in cases where participants were under 18 years. A copy of the Participant Consent Form can be seen in Appendix D. Verbal consent was given and documented where consultations were conducted over the phone with responses typed into Survey Monkey. In these

² CREATE spoke to four young people currently in youth detention. These young people chose to identify their placement prior to entering detention.

cases, consent was given prior to the consultation taking place. Young people and carers were provided with the opportunity to ask questions before commencing interviews.

At the beginning of each interview, CREATE staff outlined the purpose of the consultation, what the session would involve, and how the information collected would be used. Young people were given the opportunity to decline to participate prior to the start of the consultation and informed they could withdraw at any time during the process without any consequences for future involvement with CREATE. Young people were also informed that if they shared information that led the interviewer to believe they or another young person in care appeared unsafe or in danger of harm, their situation would have to be reported to the relevant authorities.

Data collection

CREATE mostly conducted face-to-face interviews with participants who attended events conducted by CREATE at various centres. This included young people from Bundaberg (n = 5), Rockhampton (n = 4), Toowoomba (n = 8) and Townsville (n = 11). The CREATE team also visited four young people in youth detention who had both an out-of-home care and youth justice experience. Participants who were unable to visit the CREATE Brisbane office were eligible to complete the survey over the phone. See Table 2 for data regarding participation method.

Table 2. Data Collection Method

Survey Method	Number of Young People (n=42)
Face-to-Face Interview (with hard-copy survey)	28
Online Group (with staff support)	8
Telephone Interview	6

For these consultations, a CREATE staff member would work through the questions with the participant and provided clarification about questions when sought. Responses were collected using either a hard copy or on a device using the online survey monkey link. The duration of a one-on-one interview was approximately 30 minutes. In recognition of the time and effort provided by young people, each participant was given a \$25 gift voucher. Food and refreshments were also provided during the face-to-face interviews.

Data Analysis

Survey responses were de-identified and transferred from Survey Monkey for analysis. A mixed methods approach was used to analyse the data: Statistical analysis for quantitative questions and thematic analysis for qualitative questions. This combination provides information that helps us understand and gain insight from the group of participants, as well as highlighting young people’s voices in their own words.

CREATE believes it is important to hear the direct lived experiences of young people with an out-of-home-care experience so participants’ quotes are used within this report. In order to protect the identities of the young people involved, attributions of the quotes are made using the participant’s sex and age.

Limitations

The intent of the consultation was to identify young people’s stances on supported placements until 21. It is important to note that this consultation is limited by the number of participants (n = 42) and sample selection. According to DCSYW (2020), 41% of young people on a child protection order are female, 8% of young people on an order are in residential care and 43% of young people in care are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. The sample within this consultation had higher participation rates from females, young people in residential and foster care, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

and young people living in regional areas, although this provided an opportunity to hear the voices of more regional young people. Additionally, the consultation only captured young people aged 15-18 years. While these discrepancies are minor, the findings in this report may differ from the views of groups that are underrepresented. Further research with a larger, more representative sample would be needed to determine prevalence of the views reported.

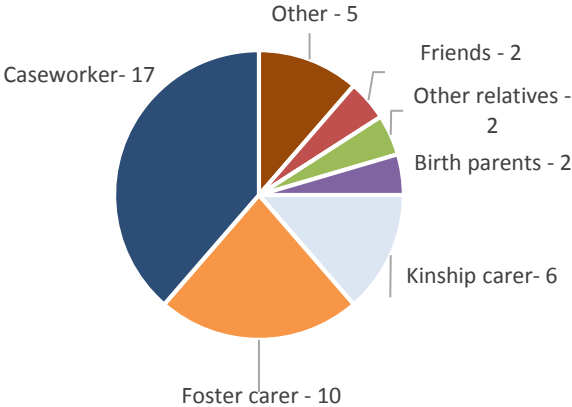
Findings

Transition Planning

Participants were asked, “Who has spoken to you about what will happen in your placement when you turn 18?” Young people were able to select more than one option. There were a total of 59 responses. There were 15 participants (36%) who indicated that “no one” had spoken to them about their placements after turning 18. The remaining 44 responses were provided by 27 participants.

Figure 1 illustrates responses from participants who had spoken with someone about their lives post-care. Of these responses, caseworkers were the most common choice (n = 17) followed by foster carers (n = 10), kinship carers (n = 6) and other – which included workers from community services or non-government organisations (n = 5). Birth parents, other relatives and friends were each selected twice.

Figure 1. Persons with Whom Young People Had Spoken About their Placements after Turning 18.



**Note. Forty-four responses were made by 27 participants. Some participants may have selected more than one option.*

Young people were then given a range of placement options and were asked where they were planning to live after turning 18, as presented in Figure 2. Both “Unsure” and “Renting alone” options had nine participants each, followed by living with a kinship carer (n = 6) and foster carer (n = 5).

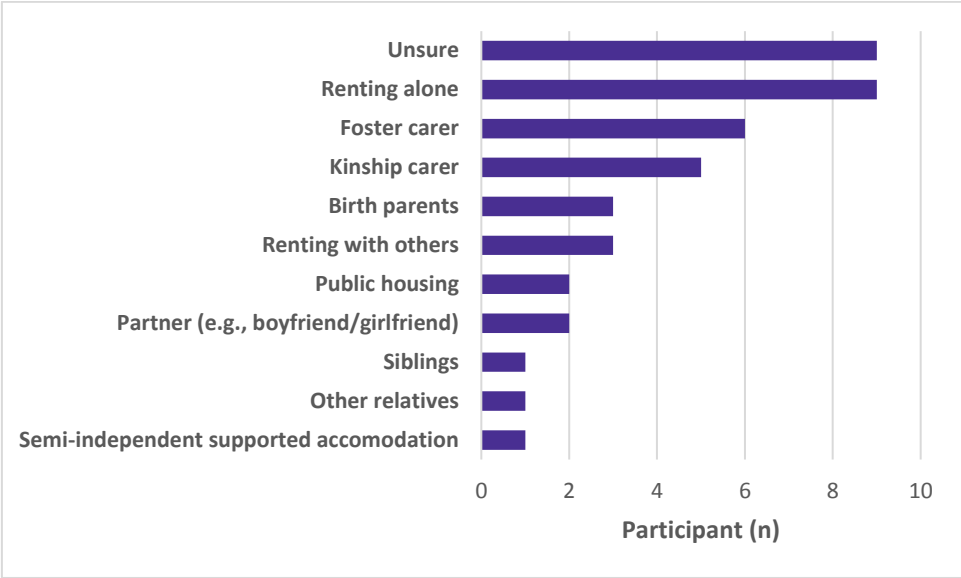
When asked to provide further comments on their answers, participants commonly mentioned that they were not ready to leave care with many not knowing what leaving-care plan arrangements they had in place causing a sense of uncertainty.

I am unsure of this question because I don't know where I'm going to stay after I turn 18. (Female, 16)

This uncertainty was further highlighted by young people with a youth justice experience who reported extra barriers to receiving assistance and feeling unsupported by Child Safety.

I'm in here for 8 months and all I want is to know where I'm going to stay when I'm getting out. I'll find out the day before... [The last time I got out] Child Safety signed bail and police said that by 6pm if I didn't have a place, I would be rearrested... I stayed with my sister which was 4 hours away. I'm on the phone one to two times a week asking for a placement. It's straining my relationship with my sister. I feel ignored. (Male, 17)

Figure 2. Where are Young People Planning to Live after Turning 18?



Participants who proposed to rent alone at 18 provided further comments with the main reason alluding to their desire to “be as independent as possible.” Some young people elaborated, stating they disliked living with others or wanted to have more personal control.

On the other hand, several young people who were not ready to leave care felt unprepared to live independently while mentioning that they “do not like being alone.” Participants’ carers were viewed as family and as important support networks that they wanted to maintain. However, this was not always the case. There were a few young people who wanted to reconnect with their birth families or move out with partners or friends.

Confidence in Independent Life Skills

Participants were then asked to rate their level of confidence on a six-point rating scale (1: Not at all confident; 6: Very confident) for each independent living skill.³ These included housing-keeping, managing money, getting around, accessing health care, finding somewhere suitable to live, and getting a job. Figure 3 illustrates a comparison of the participants’ responses between each of these life-skill domains. For simplicity, responses have been combined to indicate “Not confident”, “Mixed” and “Very confident.”

For this question, it is important to note that there were many young people who had mixed feelings about their confidence in each of these independent life skills resulting in a picture that is less clear. Nonetheless, the areas in which young people expressed the most confidence were in “Housekeeping” (cooking, shopping, cleaning); “Getting around” (catching public transport, driving, travelling independently); and “Accessing health care.”

The area of least confidence for young people was related to “Managing money”; “Getting a job”; and “Finding somewhere suitable to live.”

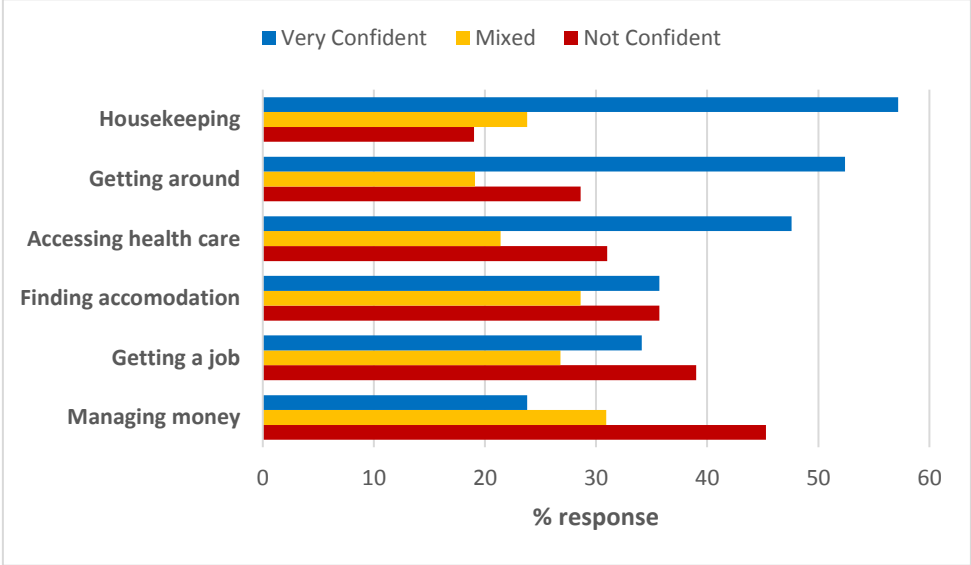
From the additional comments made, many young people reflected about feeling unprepared to live independently at 18, especially the young people in the youth detention centre. The majority of comments expressed were related to having more practical support from caseworkers or carers, and opportunities or workshops to be “shown how to do things.” Examples of skills young people wanted

³ Respondents also were given the option of indicating if they thought this question didn’t apply to them.

to learn how to do on their own included budgeting, paying bills, making appointments, communicating, cooking food, or being able to get a car.

Better preparation. It's a bit late. I'm nearly 18. [I need] help controlling my urges to buy stuff and meal planning. If I'm eating one meal a day successfully, I'm happy. (Male, 17)

Figure 3. Comparison of Participant’s Confidence Ratings in Different Independent Life Skills



In addition to being shown these life skills, young people wanted opportunities to practice and develop their abilities, confidence, and personal experience whilst in care so they could use them after they transition. For instance, being able to apply these skills and experiences in finding employment.

Opportunities and better support. Some jobs you need experience but it can be hard to get experience. (Female, 17)

One participant who experiences depression mentioned wanting more professional help in coping with depressive episodes that affect motivation to do things.

I know how to house-keep but I get sad and then I don't clean anything. A lot of these topics, I feel capable of doing them but it is a matter of keeping the motivation. I find it really hard if I am having a depressive episode. (Non-binary, 17)

Of the few young people who felt confident to live independently, most had already been living independently, while other young people wanted to have more independence to do things on their own.

Having more independence in paying bills and making appointments. (Female, 15)

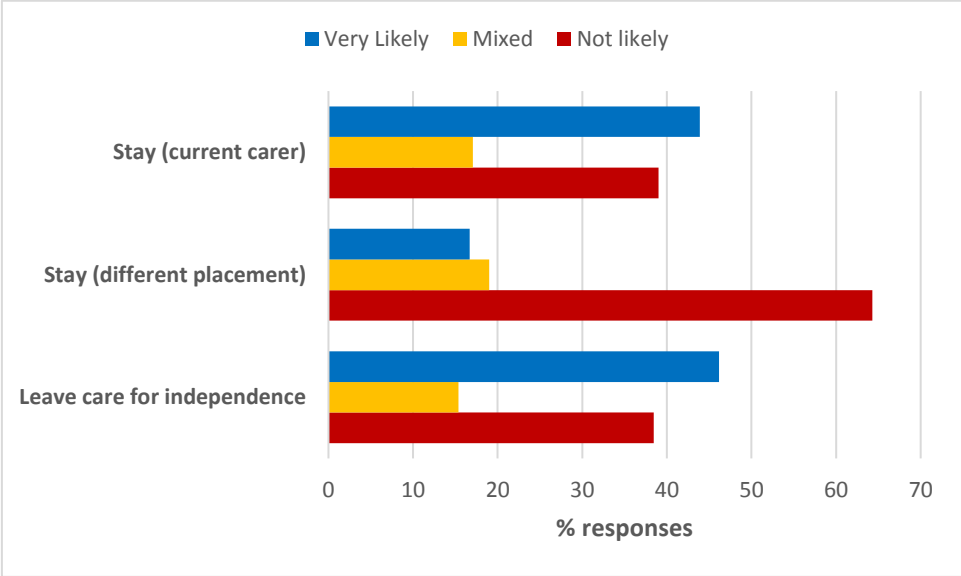
I would feel more confident if I was shown how to budget money. I can catch buses to and from school but if I had to catch a bus to Sydney I would need someone to show me how to do that. It would be helpful to have someone to support me to make doctor's appointments. (Male, 15)

Support and Placement to 21

When asked to what age support should be continued for remaining with a carer, 19 respondents (45%) selected “21 years”, 11 respondents (26%) chose “no age limit”, eight respondents (19%) chose “25 years” and “18 years” was the least favourable choice with only four respondents (10%). Clearly, this general pattern shows that young people believe supported placements should be provided beyond 18 years, with 21 years rated as the ideal age by most participants.

Next, respondents were asked “If given the choice when you turn 18 years, how likely is it that you would pick each of the following options: a) stay with a current carer until you turn 21 years; b) stay in a different supported placement until you turn 21 years; and c) leave care and live independently.” Some participants chose not to answer all of these questions. Responses on the six-point scale (1: Not at all likely; 6: Very likely) have been combined into “Not likely”, “Mixed”, and “Very likely” and compared across each of these choices as seen in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Likelihood of Young People Choosing to Stay With their Carer, in a Different Placement, or Leave Care if Given the Choice at 18



Overall, it appeared that participants were more likely to choose either “stay with their current carer” (18/41) or “leave care for independence” (18/39). Interestingly, almost two-thirds of the participants (27/42) were “not likely” to choose to stay in a different supported placement.

Comments that elaborated their answers showed many young people expressed their desire to be independent. However, they needed more support, assistance, time, and understanding to do so based on their individual situations and at a more gradual pace. Common barriers that were mentioned included not being able to afford to live on their own, and feeling unprepared due to a lack of independent living skills.

I am not ready. I have no money and I don't know enough things about the world to live independently. (Female, 17)

There have been times when I have been unsure. If it is supported I would worry less. I don't have the skills to live independently. (Male, 17)

Those that had existing health conditions or disabilities stated that they would require extra support.

I would like to stay with a carer to help me with my borderline personality and possible PTSD. They would be able to understand it. (Female, 16)

A few participants were worried at the thought of their placements breaking down.

I've learnt that a lot of placements haven't been as stable as I'd thought. I think it's important to keep other options in mind. (Non-binary, 17)

Others disliked the idea of being alone and unsupported.

I don't think I am in a position to live independently... I most likely don't have the necessary skills to live by myself and it is nice to have the comfort of other people around. (Female, 17)

Several reported that they would not be able to stay in their current placement even though they wanted to as they lived in residential care.

I don't think I will be able to stay [in] this resi until I'm 21. I would like to. It's really supportive and the workers are nice. (Female, 16)

Many comments also indicated that young people needed more regular check-ins by their caseworkers and child safety officers in order to maintain connection and support to keep them on track.

I'd like to live independent but with support. I want support but independent, someone to pop in every few days. When it stopped, I went back to crime. (Male, no age)

Reasons given by participants who chose to stay were because they already have a stable “home” and family-like connections with their carers that were similar to having a “safety net.” This stable placement would allow the young people to pursue future plans such as further study or work without disruption and the added stress of managing to live on their own.

It is convenient. Going into adulthood is the point where you are trying to figure everything out. Being in a stable environment is good for that time rather than moving around. (Female, 17)

Benefits of Staying With a Carer Until 21

Participants were asked what they thought were the benefits of staying with a carer until 21. Their responses were thematically analysed and are presented in Table 3. Themes included having the same opportunities as non-care young people, having a more gradual transition, a stable place to live, extra time to complete schooling, develop independent skills with the help of supportive people such as carers and service providers and the positive impact it would have on mental health.

Table 3. *Thematic Analysis of Staying With a Carer Until 21*

Summary of Young People's Responses	Number of mentions (n = 52)
Same opportunities as non-care young people	24
Gradual transition to independence	14
Have stable place to live (finish school, go to uni, or look for work)	8
Better mental and emotional health	6

**Note. A total number of 52 comments were made by 42 participants. Some participants may have commented more than once.*

Same Opportunities as Non-care Peers. Overall, young people in care expressed their need for more support as they are already disadvantaged and vulnerable to poor life outcomes such as homelessness and poor mental health. Participants advocated for their right to have the same opportunities and life outcomes as their non-care peers.

I think that it would be good because it is not expected of kids who are not in care to leave before 21. Being able to stay with a carer further establishes equality and that we are all kids. Expectations should be the same. (Non-binary, 17)

Gradual transition and Housing Stability. Staying in a supported placement until 21 would give young people more time to gradually prepare themselves and become confident to live independently, similar to transition periods for non-care young people. It would also provide housing that allowed participants to finish school and have less pressure to have to support themselves financially during an already challenging life period.

I think it would give you time after you graduate to get a job or study a bit to get stable ground. It gives you more time. Leaving at 18 is a big change - leaving high school and going into the adult world. (Female 17)

Better Mental and Emotional Health. The last theme surrounded benefits to young people’s mental health and their need to feel connected, have a sense of stability and normality and experiencing less stress during this transitional stage. Especially so, for young people who have experienced past trauma, struggle with their mental health, or live with a disability.

When you are in the system, you don't get the same upbringing as others would get so you need more support. You can't just cut someone off. (Female, 15)

Challenges of Staying With a Carer Until 21

Next, young people described the challenges that could occur if they remained with a carer until 21. These are summarised in Table 4. There were seven participants who did not think there would be any challenges at all.

Table 4. *Thematic Analysis of the Challenges of Staying With a Carer Until 21*

Summary of Young People’s Responses	Number of mentions (n = 37)
Lack of agency/ privacy	17
Nothing – “it wouldn’t be challenging”	7
Mental and emotional challenges	6
Complicated relationships	5
Housing instability	2

**Note. A total number of 37 comments were made by 42 participants. Some participants may have commented more than once.*

Lack of Agency or Privacy. For the participants who did, 17 responses indicated that a lack of personal agency or ability to gain full independence would be the most difficult challenge. This included possible limitations to having their own privacy.

I already get pissed off because they know every detail. I don't want to ask permission for everything. (Female, 16)

Mental and emotional challenges. Emotional concerns raised by young people involved being unable to return to their birth family living overseas, feeling unmotivated or unable to open up to others, “*finding or losing culture*”, and feeling different “*knowing they aren’t your family.*”

Complicated Relationships. Five participants thought relationships with carers could be complicated, with two participants suggesting young people “*might be too dependent on carers or guardians*” causing the transition to independence to be even more challenging. Others commented that forming relationships or getting into arguments with carers or someone in the carer’s family, particularly if their carer is an older sibling, could make things difficult.

Housing Instability. One participant living in residential care also stressed that they did not have the choice to remain in a supported placement. Another participant mentioned that they would find it challenging to pay rent.

Individualised Support Needs

Participants were asked what types of supports they would need to address challenges they had if they remained with a carer (Question 17), or if they lived independently (Question 18). A summary of these findings are presented in Table 5.

Professional Help. Responses indicated that young people needed access to support services that catered holistically to their wellbeing; they needed to have social, mental, emotional, and physical health support services readily available to use. However, the timing of use would depend on the young person’s individual needs and situations. This included access to professional help services such as counselling or mental health services, gambling support, health or specialist medical care.

Access to mental health support up to the age of 25. I think there should be more organizations like Headspace. At the moment Headspace are beyond capacity but I think more organisations should assist people to the age of 25. (Non-binary, 17)

Table 5. Thematic Analysis of Young People's Support Needs

Summary of Young People’s Responses	Number of mentions (n = 89)
Professional help/ support services	24
Supports to develop practical life skills	21
Housing/ Financial assistance (e.g. income/ rent/ job support)	19
Stable and supportive relationships	16
Regular check-ins with caseworkers	7
Personal outlets or supports	2

**Note. A total of 89 comments were made by 42 participants. Some participants may have commented more than once.*

Supports to Develop Practical Life Skills. There were 21 mentions of young people wanting access to life-skill programs that showed them how to develop important independent living skills such as cooking, communicating with family, and obtaining employment. Improving awareness of and accessibility to these services was noted, in addition to having support services such as CREATE Foundation, Next Step, and Youth Connect.

Someone to help you to find somewhere to live and tell you what sort of things you need to buy. Someone to help you to apply for Centrelink and stuff like that. (Female, 17)

Housing and Financial Assistance. The need for more practical and material support for housing, rent, financial support, and food vouchers were also reported.

Access to somewhere for housing and some sort of advice for financial support. (Male, 15)

Stable and Supportive Relationships. Young people wanted to feel socially and emotionally supported by way of maintaining both informal connections with family members, carers, and formal relationships with caseworkers and Child Safety Officers. With seven participants who suggested they wanted more check-ins by their caseworkers or Child Safety Officers.

Still have a case worker that checks in on you and have your needs met. Calls weekly and drops in every week or so. (Female, 15)

However, two participants highlighted a barrier in having such relationships and the disadvantage that it causes. Of these young people, one recounted their experience from living in youth detention.

More regular visits with my Child Safety Officer. I think having visits with a Child safety Officer would be important if you don't have a carer. If you don't have a carer you are immediately more disadvantaged. A carer can help to contact Child Safety Officers and access resources for kids in care opposed to someone without stronger links to Child Safety. (Non-binary, 17)

I'd prefer to live with a carer and I need to get friends. I have no one on the outside [of youth detention]. Child safety can't just ditch you if they raised you. (Male, 17)

A few young people also mentioned having personal outlets such as access to music, pets, or working as ways that could help address the challenges they may face.

Future Outcomes: Housing, Education, Training, and Employment

Young people were asked to estimate how likely it would be for them to achieve a variety of life milestones, including completing Year 12, finding suitable accommodation, engaging in further study, obtaining an apprenticeship, and finding employment, under the conditions of remaining with a carer or living independently. Results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Comparison of Participants' Likelihood of Achieving Outcomes in Various Life Domains if Staying With a Carer or Living Independently

Stay with carer						
	Completed Year 12 (n = 22)	Find suitable accommodation (n = 40)	Further study (n = 40)	In an apprenticeship (n = 39)	Employed Full time (n = 39)	Employed Part time (n = 39)
Not likely (%)	23	5	10	23	10	10
Mixed (%)	18	30	27	33	36	21
Very likely (%)	59	65	63	44	54	69
Live independently						
	Completed Year 12 (n = 21)	Find suitable accommodation (n = 37)	Further study (n = 38)	In an apprenticeship (n = 38)	Employed Full time (n = 38)	Employed Part time (n = 39)
Not likely (%)	57	24	37	45	26	15
Mixed (%)	10	46	37	34	34	46
Very likely (%)	33	30	26	21	40	39

* Note: Some participants chose not to respond to some questions. Percentages are based on the number of responses for each life domain.

In general, more positive outcomes are predicted if participants stayed with their carer until 21 compared to if they lived independently after turning 18. The percentages of respondents estimating they were "Very likely" to achieve a positive outcome in each life domain were much higher if young people were able to stay with their carer than if they were attempting to look after themselves. This was particularly the case for "Completing Year 12", "Enrolling in further study", and "Employed part-time."


One participant recounted her struggles of trying to return to school after dropping out.

I went back to school, thinking that I could finish. I found myself homeless, trying to find places to stay as well as going to school. It was overwhelming. (Female, 18)

Another young person highlighted the difficult reality of finding suitable housing whilst transitioning to independence.

With the responsibilities with living independently, it puts a lot of pressure on someone to be able to find accommodation whilst looking after themselves. (Non-binary, 17)

Relatively few young people were interested in completing an apprenticeship, and many young people stated finding employment was difficult due to it being a complicated process. Barriers such as not having access to transport, contacts or role models who could give advice about job-seeking were also reported to affect chances of employment, especially if the young person was living independently.



I would find it hard. Transport is a big thing. I have no contacts and don't know anyone who is employed. (Male, 17)

Probably wouldn't have life together as much without support. It's easier to slip off track. (Female, 15)

Participants who were turning 18 and lived in residential care were also asked if an agency had discussed future living arrangements with them. This question only applied to 12 young people, of whom seven responded “Yes.” Options that were given to young people leaving residential care included community housing, youth hostels, returning back to their birth family’s home, entering a group home, or supported independent living accommodation.

Returning to a Supported Placement after Leaving Care

Participants were asked how helpful they thought it would be to be able to return to a supported placement after turning 18 and leaving care. Of the 41 young people who responded, 28 (68%) thought it would be very helpful, 11 respondents (27%) had mixed feelings and only two respondents (5%) felt it would not be helpful.

Again, young people thought it was very important to still maintain connection and support from carers so they would not be alone and would have a safety net to rely on, in particular if they were feeling stressed, were at risk of homelessness, or were struggling financially.

Typically, it is not expected of a child who lives with their biological parents to not come back for support after they turn 18. Why should that be expected of kids in care especially considering the additional problems that they face? (Non-binary, 17)

By that stage seeing carers is your one 'fall-back'. They are the people you go to, to get advice from. (Male, 15)

Others added that being able to access counsellors to talk to past 21 was also crucial for their mental and emotional health.


I would like to be able to keep in contact with carers and ask for help. I would like to have my counsellor as well. I would probably be screwed without them. (Female, 16)

Other final remarks from young people on the topic of supported placements until 21 emphasised the wide-ranging need for adopting an individualised approach. This was because each young person had unique care experiences that saw some as more disadvantaged than others. This was common among young people with unstable placements, poor relationships with Child Safety and carers, those living in residential care, or who had a juvenile justice experience, and some young people who were unable to maintain connection to family or culture.

These areas should, however, be adequately covered if genuine participation of young people in transition care-planning is being implemented in practice. However, as we can see from the evidence, this currently is not always the case.

Extra attention is also crucial for young people in the justice system so that they do not fall through the cracks and become more disadvantaged compared to young people with stable placements, supportive families, and positive relationships with caseworkers.

I don't think Child Safety should leave people astray at 18. There should be other support systems around. I can just go to my Mum but some people don't have that. Child Safety just leave them. I don't talk to any of them. I don't know [any support services]. I am always invested in drugs but I want to change that. I would like info about support. (Female, 16)



Several comments drew attention to the need for “*connecting with family*”, especially siblings, and culture, particularly for participants of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

It will get done even if it takes time. You've got to believe in yourself. Indigenous games and language helps. You don't want culture to be lost. I stood up to be a mentor for others because I don't want to be lost. (Female, 16)

Another young person emphasised the importance of having more positive role models in life.

Making the age 21 for young people would be beneficial for young people as it offers support they probably wouldn't have. Having a positive role model in your life can be life-changing. (Female 16)

Lastly, one participant summed up the general consensus of the findings with the following quote.

I think it is really important for it to be changed to 21. Eighteen is not a good age for young people with leaving school and it is unreasonable to expect young people to find a job and live by themselves... Leaving the comfort of a household and roof over your head at 18 takes away young people's stability when they need it most. (Female, 17)


Discussion

The aim of this consultation was to listen to the voices of 42 young people with a care experience to understand whether they would recommend living in supported placements until 21, their perceived level of confidence and preparedness to live independently, and their views relating to the benefits, challenges, and future life outcomes that extending support for their placements would bring.

As the findings clearly illustrate, the majority of participants felt that young people should have the option to remain in their placement supported up to at least 21 years of age. Not only does this include staying in a supported placement, but also having access to vital support services and the option to return to a supported placement up until 21, even if a young person decides to exit the care system once their care order expires at 18. In having support for their placements extended, young people saw the advantages of maintaining a suitable place to live, being given more time to develop independent living skills, and ensuring that they would have the financial means to support themselves independently in the future or have the ability to engage in further study.

According to the policy, *Transitioning from care into adulthood* (DCSYW, 2018), transition planning for young people in OOH should begin at 15 years of age. Participation of young people in transition planning is embedded in the *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017* (Queensland Government, 2017) and outlined in the *Children and young people's participation strategy* (G-Force, 2012) which was co-signed by DCSYW. However, there are still significant gaps at a practice level as indicated by the participants' general sense of uncertainty of life after exiting the care system. Similar findings to the Queensland results in CREATE's *National Survey of Out-of-Home Care* that reported young people were not adequately involved in leaving-care planning (McDowall, 2018). Ensuring that young people's voices are at the centre of decision-making and transition planning is vital for transition plans to be meaningful and useful.

Accommodation is a key aspect of all transition planning, and while some care-experienced young people preferred to live independently at 18, 21% of participants felt unsure about where they would live after their orders expired. This expressed uncertainty and the lack of confidence in their life skills to live independently is concerning, although not surprising, given the increased risk of homelessness and social disadvantage that young care leavers experience compared to their non-care peers (McDowall, 2020; Muir et al., 2019).



Bath (2008) observed that young people in residential care are statistically more vulnerable than young people in stable foster care placements. Not only was this consistent with the findings from the 12 participants who lived in residential care, but also for the young people whom CREATE visited in youth detention. These participants reported having little to no relationship or support from their caseworkers or Child Safety Officers. Therefore, DCSYW must provide extra consideration such as ensuring staff are able to establish and maintain better relationships and rapport with young people, even if (or when) they are involved with youth justice, so that these vulnerable cohorts are not overlooked and are not allowed to slip through the cracks.

As existing literature reports, young people are more likely to experience increased unemployment, as well as mental and physical health challenges (Mendes et al., 2011; Muir et al., 2019; Munro et al., 2012). Access to a safe, secure, and affordable home is crucial for a successful transition from care (Johnson et al., 2010) and extending supported placements for young people in care is associated with greater educational attainment and employment, and decreased homelessness and youth justice engagement (Courtney & Hook, 2017; Courtney et al., 2018). Participants identified that they needed access to a suite of support services that could assist them with a range of social, financial, practical and mental, emotional or physical health needs. While it is common for young people in society to leave home in their young adult years, face a challenge, and then move back with a biological parent, young people with a care experience often do not have this safety net. According to the socioeconomic cost-benefit analysis by Deloitte Access Economics (2016), extending placements and support up to 21 could provide the government a life-course cost-saving of \$1.40-\$2.69 for every dollar invested.

Furthermore, young people expressed diverse and individualised needs in regards to developing necessary life skills that would help improve their confidence to live independently. Young people expressed greater confidence in housekeeping and accessing transport skills whilst often expressing a lack of confidence in managing finances, job-seeking and gaining employment. The majority of young people felt that remaining in a supported placement until 21 would have a positive impact on future housing, employment, education and further study outcomes, mainly because it provided stability, maintained important social networks and relationships, and offered young people more time and support to successfully prepare themselves for independence and adulthood. It made this important transition more gradual.

There were a few young people who mentioned that they wanted to reconnect or return to their birth parents or families after leaving care. More support and practical advice is needed to ensure that birth families are prepared and young people are able to do this safely (Healy, 2019). Likewise, young people of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds need support to help find or maintain connection with family, country, and culture.

Actions

As a result of this consultation, CREATE advocates for the following five actions.

1. Providing Flexible and Tailored Supported Placements Up to 21

- DCSYW to support carers (pay carer allowance) to allow any young people to remain in placement after turning 18 if they choose to do so until the age of 21 years. This support must be provided for all young people with a care experience regardless of placement type including young people living in residential care, semi-independent living, non-approved placements and those in the justice system.
- Support services administered by non-government organisations, but funded by DCSYW, should allow flexible entry options that ensure young people still have guaranteed housing access if a placement breaks down when a young person is over 18. Models such as Youth Connect or the Next Step Plus program could be modified and expanded for post-care placement support up to 21.
- Provide a collaborative, holistic approach among existing support services to ensure young people know of the services they are eligible to receive, and are supported to access the services that they need.

2. Increased Life Skills Training

- DCSYW to fund programs that empower young people aged 15 to 25, with a care experience, to enhance their life skills. These programs should cover a range of independent living skills with particular focus on areas such as budgeting and seeking employment.

3. Participation in Planning and Support

- DCSYW to develop worker training experiences that highlight good practice for sector workers in forming relationships with young people, shared decision-making, and transition planning by enforcing proper implementation of the policies and practices outlined in the *Child Protection Reform Amendment Act 2017* and the *Children and young people's participation strategy*.

4. Clarity Regarding Support to 25

- Provide more clarity and awareness of support up to 25 as outlined in the *Transitioning from care into adulthood* policy (DCSYW, 2018). There must be consistency in approaches to supporting young people from 18 to 25 in all service centres.
- Strengthen the present policies with clear provisions of supports that are provided directly by DCSYW up to 25.
- DCSYW should develop a Transition practice manual that includes practical examples of support for service centres that assist young people up to 25.

5. Additional Support for Young People who Choose to Return to Family at 18

- DCSYW must provide additional support for young people to safely reconnect with a parent after 18. This could include work with the family (e.g., discussion of safety and support measures, self-care and support service options) to increase its caring capacity in preparation for the transition.



Conclusion

This CREATE consultation sought to find out how prepared young people felt in their ability to live independently and whether supported placement to 21 would be beneficial to young people with a care experience. The findings confirm that the majority of young people were unprepared to leave care at 18 years, and felt that a gradual transition with more time, support, and understanding in developing important life skills to become independent and ready to leave care, were crucial to a successful transition. Benefits, challenges, and the types of supports needed during the extended period were also identified by young people. In addition, they estimated the impact that staying with a carer rather than leaving care for independence might have on their future life trajectories in different domains.

In Queensland, key policy and practice changes have been implemented by DCSYW to support care-experienced young people's transition to adulthood. Provision of support to 25 and funding for services such as *Next Step Plus* meet vital needs for young people as they transition to adulthood, but these initiatives do not go far enough. Participants in this consultation shared that they believe young people should be able to stay in a supported placement until at least 21. The majority of participants who themselves wanted to live independently still believed that young people in general should have the option to remain in supported placements. Young people also shared diverse and individualised support needs about their transition-to-adulthood journey. Most participants felt that remaining in supported placements would have a positive impact upon future housing, education, study, and employment outcomes.


Moving forward, DCSYW and the sector need to genuinely listen to care-experienced young people and improve the system by:

- providing the option of flexible and tailored supported placements to 21 for all young people with an OOHC experience;
- increasing life skills training;
- embedding increased participation in all transition planning and decision making to provide individualised transition support;
- providing clarity for young people, and resources for DCSYW workers regarding DCSYW support up to 25;
- developing policies and practices to support young people who choose to return to family when they transition from care.



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Appendix A. Survey Questions



Support for Young People Until 21

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO COMPLETE THIS SURVEY

Please answer all questions and leave comments where applicable. You can click through the sections by clicking "Next" at the bottom of the screen. At the end of the survey click the "Done" button.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Before you begin, we would like to remind you of a few things:

- Doing this survey is completely voluntarily. You can stop doing this survey at any time and this will not affect you joining in with any other CREATE events and activities.
- You can skip questions if there is a reason you would rather not answer them; however, we hope that you can share as many of your views with us as possible.
- Everything you tell us in this survey will be kept confidential (this means private) unless you tell us something that makes us concerned for your safety or for the safety of another young person in care. Then we may have to tell someone, but we will discuss this with you before we take any action.
- You can have a support person help you with the survey if you would like.
- We may use the information gained using the survey for reports and presentations but we will NEVER use your name. You will be anonymous in these reports.

Please make sure you have signed a consent form and have been given a Participant Information Sheet before you begin. You can get these from your local CREATE team.

1. What state are you from?

2. What is your post code?

3. How old are you?

4. I identify as:

Female

Male

I identify with another gender

Please specify:



5. Culturally, I identify as:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Aboriginal | <input type="radio"/> Other Cultural Group (non-English speaking background) |
| <input type="radio"/> Torres Strait Islander | <input type="radio"/> Other Cultures (Combined) |
| <input type="radio"/> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander | <input type="radio"/> No specific group |

If "Other Cultural Group" or "Other Cultures (Combined)" is chosen, please name the groups:

6. How old were you when you came into care?

7. What type of placement do you live in?

Please select only one.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Foster care | <input type="radio"/> Permanent care |
| <input type="radio"/> Kinship care | <input type="radio"/> Semi-independent supported accommodation |
| <input type="radio"/> Residential care | <input type="radio"/> Independent living |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): | |

8. Do you have a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say



Support for Young People Until 21

9. What type of disability or impairment do you have?

Please describe in your own words.

10. Are you receiving special support for your disability? This could include medication, special education, counselling, etc.

Yes

No

Any comments?



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11. Who has spoken to you about what will happen in your placement when you turn 18?

You can select more than one.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> No one has spoken to me | <input type="checkbox"/> Birth parents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caseworker | <input type="checkbox"/> Siblings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foster carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Other relatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kinship carer | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): | |

12. Where are you planning to live after you turn 18?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Foster carer | <input type="radio"/> Residential |
| <input type="radio"/> Kinship carer | <input type="radio"/> Semi-independent supported accommodation |
| <input type="radio"/> Birth parents | <input type="radio"/> Renting with others |
| <input type="radio"/> Siblings | <input type="radio"/> Renting alone |
| <input type="radio"/> Other relatives | <input type="radio"/> Public housing |
| <input type="radio"/> Friends | <input type="radio"/> Unsure |
| <input type="radio"/> Partner (e.g., boyfriend/girlfriend) | |

Why do you think this will be your choice?



13. How confident do you feel now about having the following life skills you need to live independently?

	Not at all confident	A little confident	Somewhat confident	Reasonably confident	Quite confident	Very confident	Not applicable
Housekeeping (cooking, shopping, cleaning)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Managing money (saving, banking, paying bills)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting around (catching public transport, driving, travelling independently)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessing health care (see doctor, dentist, seek emotional support)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Finding somewhere suitable to live	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Getting a job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What might help increase your confidence?



Support for Young People Until 21

14. If given the choice when you turn 18 years, how likely is it that you would pick each of the following options?

Not at all likely A little likely Somewhat likely Reasonably likely Quite likely Very likely

Stay with your current carer until you turn 21 years.

Why do you think this would be the case?

Stay in a different supported placement until you turn 21 years.

Why do you think this would be the case?

Leave care and live independently.

Why do you think this would be the case?

15. What do you think would be good about staying with a carer until you were 21 years?



16. What might be challenging about staying with a carer until you were 21 years?

17. What supports might help you address those challenges?

18. If you don't want to stay with a carer until 21 years, what other supports do you think it would be good to have access to?

19. To what age do you think support should be provided for remaining with a carer?

- 18 years
- 21 years
- 25 years
- No age limit

20. Will you have completed Year 12 by the time you turn 18 years?

- Yes
- No



Support for Young People Until 21

21. How likely is it that, by age 21 years, you will have completed high school (i.e., Year 12), under these two conditions:

	Not at all likely	A little likely	Somewhat likely	Reasonably likely	Quite likely	Very likely
If you were able to stay with a carer until 21 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you live independently after turning 18 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments?



Support for Young People Until 21

22. How likely is it that, by age 21 years, you will have found somewhere suitable to live, under these two conditions:

	Not at all likely	A little likely	Somewhat likely	Reasonably likely	Quite likely	Very likely	Not applicable
If you were able to stay with a carer until 21 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you live independently after turning 18 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments?

23. How likely is it that, by age 21 years, you will enrol in further study (e.g., university, TAFE, other), under these two conditions:

	Not at all likely	A little likely	Somewhat likely	Reasonably likely	Quite likely	Very likely	Not applicable
If you were able to stay with a carer until 21 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you live independently after turning 18 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments?



24. How likely is it that, by age 21 years, you will be in an apprenticeship under these two conditions:

	Not at all likely	A little likely	Somewhat likely	Reasonably likely	Quite likely	Very likely	Not applicable
If you were able to stay with a carer until 21 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you live independently after turning 18 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments?

25. How likely is it that, by age 21 years, you will be employed full-time, under these two conditions:

	Not at all likely	A little likely	Somewhat likely	Reasonably likely	Quite likely	Very likely	Not applicable
If you were able to stay with a carer until 21 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you live independently after turning 18 years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments?

26. How likely is it that, by age 21 years, you will be employed part-time, under these two conditions:

	Not at all likely	A little likely	Somewhat likely	Reasonably likely	Quite likely	Very likely	Not applicable
If you are able to stay with a carer until 21 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If you live independently after turning 18 years?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments?

27. If you are turning 18 and live in Residential Care, has your agency discussed with you where you might live in the future?

- Yes
- No
- N/A
- If "Yes", what options were offered?

28. How helpful do you think it would be, when you have left the care system, to be able to return to receive the support of carers after you turn 18?

Not at all helpful	A little helpful	Somewhat helpful	Reasonably helpful	Quite helpful	Very helpful	Not applicable
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Any comments?

29. Is there anything else you would like to say on the topic of having placement support for young people until they turn 21?

Thank you for completing this survey! To submit your responses, please click "DONE" below.

To thank you for the time and effort you put into answering our questions, we would like to give you a \$25 gift card! To organise sending your gift card, please contact your local CREATE Office.

You can also contact your local office if you have any questions about the survey or if you want to know more about what CREATE does for children and young people in out-of-home care.



HAVE YOUR SAY!

We want to hear from you...

Do you have a care experience?
Are you 15-18 years of age?

CREATE would love to chat with you to hear your thoughts. We will be exploring the topic of support and placement being extended to 21.

We are travelling to Brisbane, Bundaberg, Logan, Townsville and more. For your feedback, we'll give you a \$25 gift voucher.

Please call Andrew on (07) 3317 6020 or email andrew.foley@create.org.au if you would like to be involved or if you have any other questions.

CREATE Foundation acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land. We pay our respects to Elders; past, present and emerging.



Appendix C. Consultation Participant sheet

Extending Care to 21 CONSULTATION PARTICIPANT SHEET

Staff: Andrew Foley (Community Facilitator with CREATE)

For: A consultation with children and young people with a care experience to assist in shaping the development of services, policies and procedures of the QLD child protection system. A consultation is where people are asked for their opinion about a particular topic.

CREATE Foundation represents children and young people with a care experience in Australia. This means we listen to ideas from children and young people about foster care, kinship care and residential care and share those ideas with people who run the care system – this is called consultation.

We think it's important to ask children and young people what they think, because they are in a special position and have seen the system like no one else has.

Being part of a consultation (like a survey, interview or focus group) is always your choice.

If you are under 18 and want to be part of the consultation, your carer or worker will need to complete a consent form before we can get started. If you are over 18, you will need to complete a consent form.

What happens to the information you give us?

CREATE will summarise what you and other children and young people say in a report for the Department of Child safety, Youth and Women. CREATE will send you a summary of the report so you can see what we wrote.

No names will be used in the report. The report will show the age, culture, and types of placement of everyone in the consultation. If something you say is used as a quote, your name won't be used – only your sex and age will be given (e.g., Male, 14 years).

If you come to a group consultation you must agree not to share what people say once you have left the group; this helps protect everyone's privacy, including yours.

None of your personal details will be given to anyone else UNLESS it's needed in an emergency. If you say something that makes us concerned about the safety of you or another child or young person, we will have to report that risk and will talk to you about this.

The consultation

The consultation will either be conducted through a focus group or one-on-one discussion guided by a CREATE staff member who will ask questions.

- When:
- Where:
- What you get: A \$25 Gift Card for your time and effort.

You can ask questions if some things aren't clear to you. If you don't feel comfortable, talk to the CREATE staff member and they will help you.



Your right to say 'no'

If you agree to take part and you don't want to answer some of our questions, you don't have to. If you decide you want to stop once the consultation starts, you can ask to stop and we will. Then we won't use any of your individual answers or quotes. You can withdraw at any time during the process without any consequences for your future involvement with CREATE.

If you have any questions you can call Andrew Foley at CREATE on (07) 3317 6020.

Other stuff you might want to know

To make sure that children and young people with a care experience can have a say about the care system, CREATE is inviting children and young people with a care experience aged between 12 and 17 to take part in this consultation. Once we finish the consultation and write the report it will become the property of CREATE and we may use some or all of the information you tell us, to help us let governments and other organisations to know what you think about living in out-of-home care. Your contact details and consent information will be stored in locked files at a CREATE office for 5 years in case we need to look back at it.

If you are unhappy with your experience during the consultation and want to make a complaint you should ask to talk to **Andrew Foley** about CREATE's complaints process. If you are still not happy you can complain to the **Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women** on 1800 080 464 or email feedback@csw.qld.gov.au.

Or if you just feel like you want to talk to someone about how you are feeling about the consultation; talk to someone you trust, like CREATE on 1800 655 105 or Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.



Appendix D. Participant Consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

(Note: if you are under 18 years of age, you require permission from your carer or legal guardian or their written consent to participate; both of you need to complete this form and sign the back)

Consultation Topic: Extending care to 21 (placement and support)

Facilitator: Andrew Foley

Participant name:

I acknowledge that I am consenting to participate in the above consultation conducted by CREATE Foundation. Any information that I provide to CREATE on the survey form, in meetings, survey monkey, focus groups, during interview (by phone or in person) or through correspondence may inform the development of a report and/or publications that seek to improve the life outcomes for children and young people with an out-of-home care experience.

I agree that:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and I understand the purpose of the consultation;
- My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I know what I will be asked to do;
- My participation in this consultation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time without any consequences for future involvement with CREATE;
- The details involved in my participation in the project have been explained to me;
- The focus of this consultation is not individual advocacy but contributing comments that may lead to improvements in the care system;
- My personal information collected for the project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to, except as required by law;
- My identity will remain anonymous in reports or publications published by CREATE unless I give my consent below:

- Yes, I am happy to be identified.
- By my first name only
- By my last name only
- By my first and last name (I am over 18 years of age)

No, I don't want to be identified.

- Any information that I provide to CREATE for the consultation may be used, copied, adapted, shared or modified by CREATE for research and advocacy purposes including reports, case studies, presentations and other publications (print and electronic media) and, where I have checked "No" above, then every effort will be made to keep my identity anonymous in any report or publication;
- If I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the consultation or if I have any additional questions about my participation, I can contact the National Policy and Advocacy Manager, CREATE on 3062 4860 or email: qld@create.org.au.



PARTICIPANT CONSENT

By signing this consent form, I agree to take part in this consultation.

Name

Signature

_____/_____/2019

Date

CARER OR LEGAL GUARDIAN CONSENT (for participants under 18 years)

By signing this consent form, I give my permission for _____ to take part in this consultation.

Name

Signature

_____/_____/2019

Date

About CREATE

CREATE Foundation is the national peak consumer body for children and young people with an out-of-home care experience. We represent the voices of over 45,000 children and young people currently in care, and those who have transitioned from care up to the age of 25.

Our vision is that all children and young people with a care experience reach their full potential.

Our mission is to create a better life for children and young people in care.

To do this we:

- **CONNECT** children and young people to each other, CREATE and their community to
- **EMPOWER** children and young people to build self-confidence, self-esteem, and skills that enable them to have a voice and be heard to
- **CHANGE** the care system, in consultation with children and young people, through advocacy to improve policies, practices and services and increase community awareness.

We achieve our mission by providing a variety of activities and programs for children and young people in care, and conducting research and developing policy to help us advocate for a better care system.