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Young people's experiences of leaving care and their support needs: Recent research and promising practices

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CFCA Webinar

24 July 2019

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Discovering what
works for families

Transitions from out-of-home care in Victoria:

The Beyond 18 Study

Jade Purtell & Stewart Muir



The Beyond 18 Study



- Commissioned by Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).
- Data collection between 2015 and 2018
- Main components:
 - Survey of Young people with an OOHC experience
 - Qualitative interviews with young people who participated in the survey
- Also data from:
 - Online surveys of OOHC and Leaving Care workers and foster & kinship carers
 - Analysis of DHHS Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) data



The Survey of Young People



- Three waves of an online survey
 - Wave 1: 2015-2016
 - Wave 2: 2016-2017
 - Wave 3: 2017-2018
- Eligibility for the survey
 - Born between 1996-2001
 - Time in OOHC in Victoria after age 15
- Follow-up qualitative telephone interviews with approx. 30 young people in each survey wave (>80 in total)



Young people in the study



- Participants recruited through services, workers, peak bodies
- 202 participants in Wave 1
- 126 participants in Wave 2 and Wave 3
- Over-representation of residential care: 40% of participants compared to 15% of age peers
- Under-representation of kinship care: 11% of participants compared to 48% of age peers (in Wave 3)
- 11% of participants were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people



Snapshot of in-care experiences



- High rates of in-care movement. E.g. in the Wave 1 survey > 50% of participants had moved placement more than 3 times
- Young people in the study had limited knowledge of:
 - transition plans
 - available services or funding
- High levels of emotional and peer relationship problems in SDQ
- Low levels of educational attainment:
 - 1 in 4 school leavers had completed Year 12
 - 1 in 4 had not completed Year 10



Snapshot of post-care outcomes



- Complex patterns of post-care housing and high rates of mobility (1 in 5 had moved 3+ times in last 12 months)
- Less than half of care leavers in the study earned wages of any kind (but slight improvement over time)
- Low incomes (> 70% below the Henderson Poverty line) and high levels of financial stress
- Continued low educational achievement (at end of study only 1 in 4 finished Year 12)
 - By Wave 3, over half had undertaken further study and six people had undertaken university study



Snapshot of post-care outcomes



- High reported rates of self-harm and suicidal ideation
- Nearly 1 in 2 had indications of psychological distress on screening measures
- Service use remained variable
- Social networks and relationships important but complex:
 - Most (2 in 3) care leavers had contact with biological parents but friends, partners and former carers were more often key sources of support
 - Friends important but social networks were often limited



Outcome patterns



- Overall poorer than average outcomes in employment, education and physical and mental health
 - but also resilience and desire to improve lives
- By end of the study, a group of care leavers doing ‘less well’ had emerged - not in education or employment and with poorer mental health
- Even those doing “better” faced a range of challenges
- Study did not find single factors that “explained” why some young people had better or worse outcomes:
 - Combination of factors that could reinforce each other
- Young people told us that strong social relationships and ongoing post-care support could help



Social supports



- Around 3/4 of young people from home-based care in contact with former carers after end of order
- 1 in 3 young people who had left foster or kinship care kept in contact with former case workers
 - Over half of residential care leavers in contact with former workers
- Partners and friends the mostly frequently nominated sources of support (in Wave 3)
- 2/3 of care leavers had contact with their biological parents after leaving care
- Many reported struggles with social relationships and/or limited social networks



Community and social networks



...living in a structured home meant missing out on daily school attendance, social outings and fitting in with others. I always and still do stand out.

There were lots of people always doing paperwork for me and about me, but no one was ever able to take me to do fun things

I never invite friends over because its embarrassing. I feel different when everyone talks about things with their parents when I don't get to see mine.



Service Use



- Contact with leaving care services was variable
 - Less than half of care leavers reported contact with Leaving Care services in the first 12 months after leaving care
 - Half of care leavers received leaving care funding
- More than half of Wave 3 participants indicated that they had needed additional support when leaving OOHC
 - Areas where they wanted additional help: education, budgeting, emotional support and mental health
- Young people did not always know what services were available
- Relationships with OOHC and Leaving Care workers were crucial
 - Consistency and continuity were highly valued
 - Inconsistent support or frequent changes of worker described as harmful





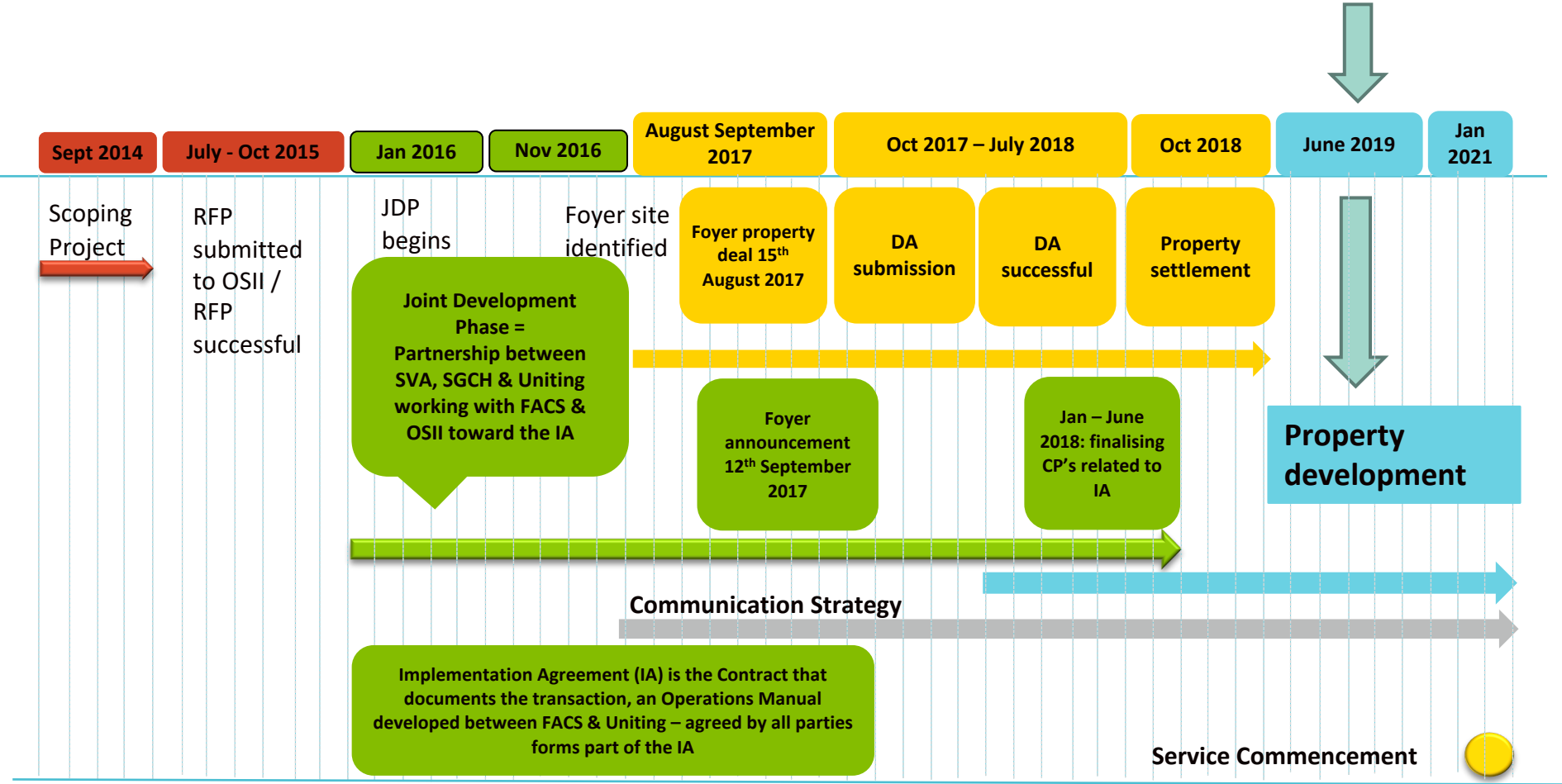
Uniting's Foyer & Extended Care Pilot Programs

Uniting

What is a Foyer?

- Focus on education & employment whilst providing safe & affordable housing to young people
- Originated in France
- Developed in the UK to respond to youth homelessness
- UK developed the Foyer Federation
- The Foyer Foundation in Australia has the goal of 30 Foyers by 2030
- Uniting are developing a purpose built Foyer with St George Community Housing, Social Ventures Australia and the NSW Government.

Project Timeline



Social Benefit Bond =

A social benefit bond (SBB) is a financial instrument that pays a return based on the achievement of **agreed social outcomes**.

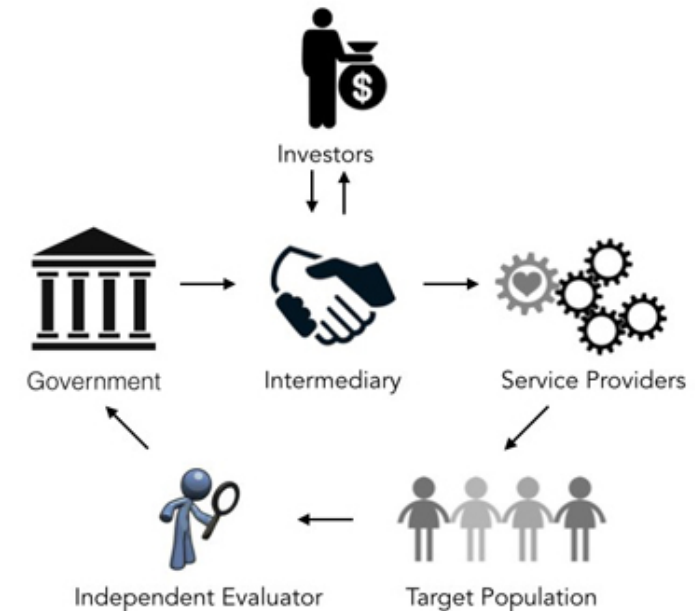
Under an SBB, **private investors** fund the delivery of services targeting an improvement in a particular social outcome.

Achievement of this outcome should **reduce need and government spending on acute and more expensive services**.

Part of the **resulting public sector savings are used to repay investors' principal** and also make additional reward payments.

The level of the return on investment is dependent on the degree of improvement achieved.

Pay for Success Model



A Foyer for young people with a care history



Young people with a care history who are homeless or at risk of homelessness

Two cohorts:

1. Young people exiting care – entering Foyer as part of their transition
2. Young people who have already exited care and are referred from other parts of the service system
 - Between 18 – 21 years upon entry to the Foyer
 - Sydney and greater NSW referral pathways

Advantaged Thinking and Foyer



- Originally developed by Colin Falconer in the UK
- Adapted by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence in Australia
- Recognises young people's **talents and strengths**
- Resources young people to develop **aspirations, goals and plans**
- Young people need ownership of the decisions that affect their future
- Ensures young people can activate their **rights and responsibilities** in accessing services
- **The capacity, strengths and opportunities within the whole community** are harnessed for each young person to achieve their full potential beyond service system reliance

Five Key Practice Areas

Place 

People 

Opportunities 

The Deal 

The Campaign 

Five Service Offers of Advantaged Thinking



Five service offers across life domains:

1. **Education:** engagement with courses, training and mainstream institutions, learning experiences
2. **Employment:** build pathways, make connections, work experiences, jobs
3. **Health and Wellbeing:** build positive physical and emotional experiences and respond to negative experience in a positive way
4. **Connections:** social and emotional knowledge, skills and opportunities to develop healthy relationships and better access to culture and community
5. **Housing and Living Skills:** prepare young people for independent living and provide them with access to a range of housing

Extended Care Pilot



- Care orders cease in NSW at 18 years
- **Uniting is an OOHC provider** (or Permanency Support Provider - PSP) in NSW
- Uniting's commitment to social justice and increased social impact
- Extended Care Pilot is a **Uniting Futures Horizon Strategic Initiative**
- **5 year pilot program** to provide ongoing support to young people leaving Uniting's care
- Designed as an early intervention response, working with young people from **15 to 21 years**, providing a seamless transition

What is different about our Extended Care Pilot?



The program will change our relationship with young people by removing the abrupt end to the care we provide in two ways:

- The provision of ongoing support to young people including ongoing foster care, or other forms of supported accommodation.
- Adopting a new way of engaging with young people based on Advantaged Thinking, delivered through coaching and mentoring and a set of youth centric processes, practices and tools.

Key features of the Pilot:

Early intervention & Continuity of support



- The Youth Development Coach is different to an OOHC case worker.
- Coaching support is consistent and flexible one to one support.
- Work in collaboration with OOHC from 15 years. The Coach will continue working with the young person post 18 years, providing this seamless transition.
- We believe in sustained, authentic and transparent relationships between coaches and young people will lead to greater engagement and higher quality outcomes.

Key features of the Pilot:

Housing is fundamental to a positive transition



Ongoing accommodation support provided in two ways:

- We will cover the cost of a **carer allowance** to enable the young person to remain with their carer to the age of 21. This is a voluntary arrangement.
- **Housing options post care will be explored early.**
- Where remaining with a foster carer is not possible, support for accommodation will consist of some **subsidised tenancy support** where other options for safe, affordable housing with secure tenure have been explored.

Key features of the Pilot: Embedded Practice Approach – Advantaged Thinking



Central to this approach is the **belief** that all young people have **capabilities, talents and aspirations** that characterise them beyond their support needs and it is our job as practitioners to provide **opportunities** and **resources** for young people to realise their individual potential.

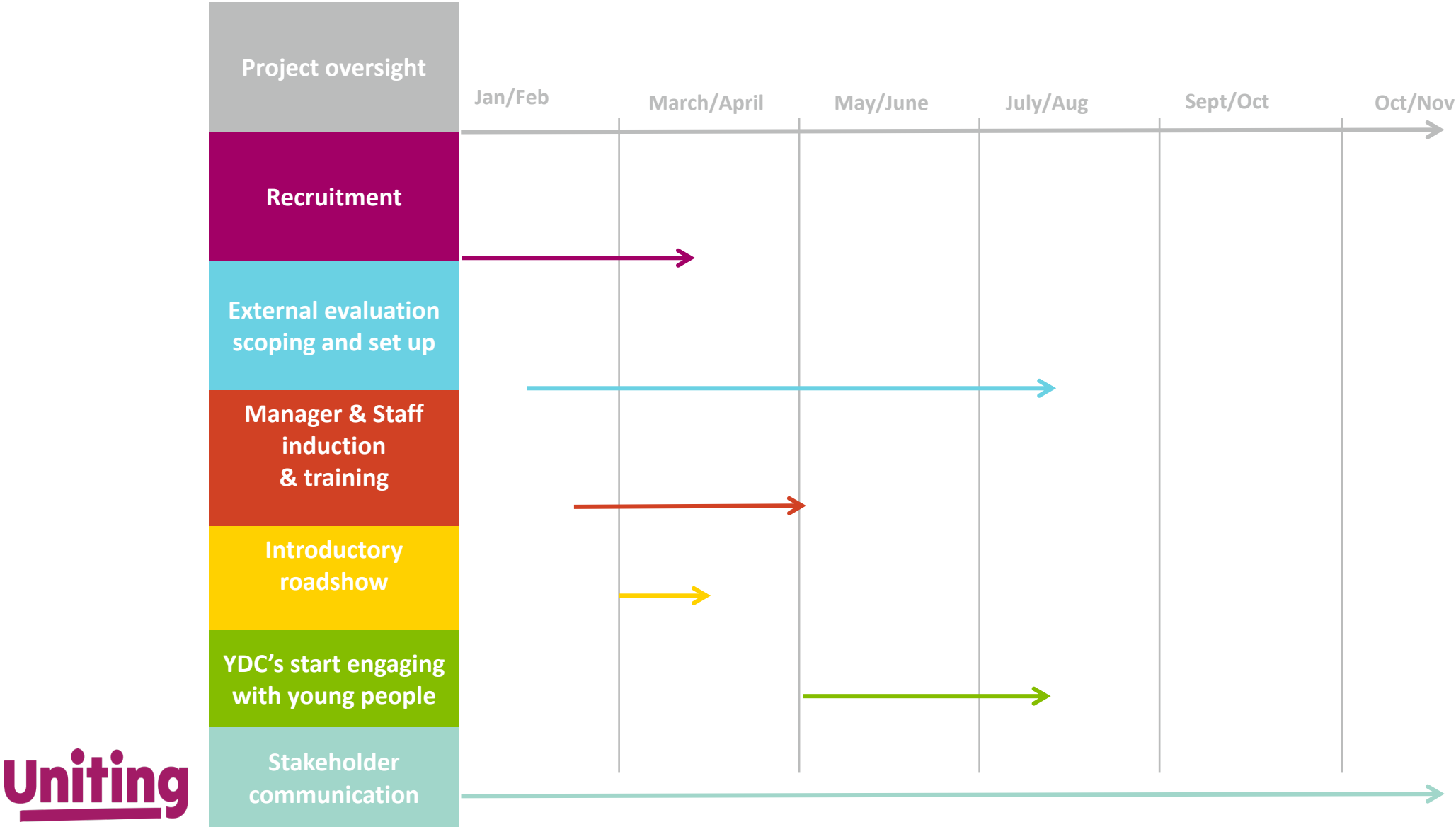
Advantaged Thinking recognises and builds young people's agency by recognising what people can do rather than what they can't do.

Pilot Evaluation



- External evaluation commissioned
- 5 years using both quantitative and qualitative data
- Process, Outcomes and Economic Evaluation
- Yearly reporting and feedback so we will be able to continually improve and refine the program in response to what we learn

Implementation Timeline 2019



Thank you



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