

# Better Futures Our Way



## A Practice Guide for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations



**VACCA**  
Connected by culture

VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY



Victorian Aboriginal  
Children & Young  
People's Alliance

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## Abbreviations

ACAC	Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organizations
APSS	Agency Performance System Support
BADAC	Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative
BDAC	Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative
BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
CRIS/SP	Client Relationship Information System/Service Providers
CSO	Community Service Organisation
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
OOHC	Out of Home Care
SDT	Service Delivery Tracking
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
VACCA	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
VACYPA	Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance

## How this Guide is set out.

This Guide is presented in three parts.

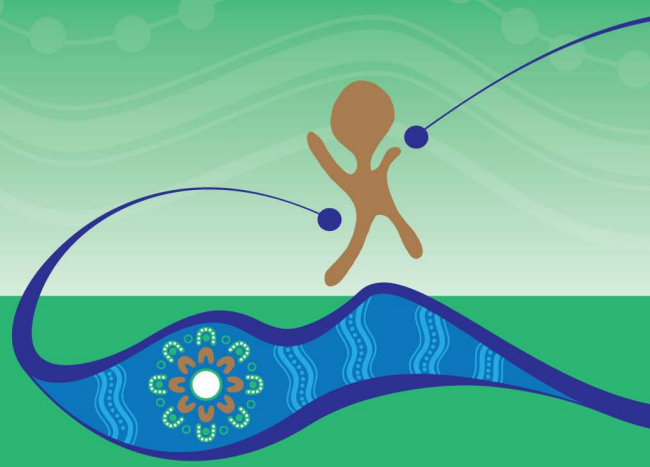
Part 1: **Describing the Program**, outlines the Better Futures Program and the practice framework on which it is based. It includes a description of the Community Connections component of Better Futures. This part also explains how this Guide came about - through the Department of Fairness and Housing (DFFH) funding the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) and Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance (VACYPA) to undertake an Aboriginal Better Futures Development Project.

Part 2: **Better Futures Our Way**, describes the Aboriginal culturally centred way of delivering Better Futures and provides guidance is based on practice wisdom from those with experience and expertise who participated in consultation workshops as part of this project

Part 3 **Procedures, Tools and Forms**, outlines the key procedures for the different aspects of the Better Futures program as well as providing links to tools and forms and further guidance.

*This Guide was produced as part of a larger undertaking called the Aboriginal Better Futures Development Project. Readers are referred to that project's report (available upon request) to learn more about the current policy and funding context for Better Futures; the Aboriginal Better Futures program logic; issues identified through consultations with ACCOs and recommendations for reform of Better Futures in the interests of young Aboriginal people transitioning from care.*

## Part 1: Describing the program



### 1. Introduction, Context and Project Background

#### 1.1 Purpose of this Guide

The Aboriginal Better Futures Practice Guide is designed for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). It provides background information about the Better Futures program as well as practice wisdom and guidance for practitioners and their managers about how the program can be delivered the Aboriginal way. It also describes the procedures, tools and templates that guide and resource the work of ACCO based Better Futures workers.

The primary audience for this Guide is Better Futures workers and managers at ACCOs delivering Better Futures across Victoria.

Those who will also find useful information in this guide to support their practice with Aboriginal young people transitioning from care include:

- Foster Care, Kinship Care and Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) Case Managers , Residential care and Targeted Care Packages (TCP) case managers/ key workers
- Child Protection Practitioners
- Community Connectors
- Mainstream Better Futures providers
- DFFH managers and staff working with young people transitioning from care to adulthood
- Agency Performance System Support teams and Better Futures Senior Project Officers working in operational divisions.

The Guide is based on practice wisdom about service elements that work for Aboriginal young people and ACCOs. It points to practice that aligns with an Aboriginal service delivery approach, an approach underpinned by maintaining and building connections to family, community and culture. It can facilitate reflective practice and support reflective supervision.

The immediate value of the Guide is in providing ACCOs with a thorough understanding of the Better Futures program. It also shares practice tips and ideas to help workers find new and creative ways to support Aboriginal young people on their journeys, working in the Aboriginal way. Ultimately, the Guide aims to help build positive outcomes for Aboriginal young people, including strengthened connection to their families, community and culture, a known protective factor in transitioning from care to supported independence.

## 1.2 What is Better Futures?

Better Futures is a new service and practice model in Victoria, designed to improve outcomes for young people up to the age of 21 who are transitioning from care to supported independence. The Better Futures program, including Home Stretch and Community Connections, was piloted in 2017 in the Department's South division, Barwon and Goulburn areas, and was then rolled out across the state in 2019. The program aims to improve service access and outcomes for young people transitioning from care by streamlining support and providing earlier engagement for young people. Earlier engagement creates a longer period to prepare for transitioning to adulthood.

The program provides support tailored to meet the individual needs of young people and is guided by the Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework<sup>1</sup>. This is a practice model adapted by the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) from the Advantaged Thinking approach developed by Colin Falconer of the UK Foyer Federation<sup>2</sup>.

This model promotes a more participatory, holistic, supportive and planned transition from care, as young people are invited to play an active role in transition planning. They do this through articulating their individual needs, goals and aspirations. The Better Futures worker and young person work collaboratively to develop and implement a plan, ensuring connection to community, culture, and support networks.

## 1.3 How this Guide was Developed: About the Aboriginal Better Futures Development Project

In June 2021, DFFH funded VACCA to undertake the *Aboriginal Better Futures Development Project*. This project involved consulting with Better Futures practitioners from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organizations (ACCOs) across Victoria. The project involved two program logic design workshops and six consultation workshops with twelve Better Futures programs from across seven ACCOs. This work determined the best practice approach in delivering the program for Aboriginal Young People.

The project was led by VACCA and supported by VACYPA. The project's governing group included representatives from VACCA, VACYPA, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC), Bendigo and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) and DFFH.

The program logic workshops and consultations shaped the content of this Guide, and also highlighted areas where the Better Futures program clearly needs to change so that all Aboriginal young people get the level of support they need. Issues were raised about how well the Better Futures funding model and practice framework recognise the needs and circumstances of Aboriginal young people, and how well they enable ACCOs to incorporate culture and culturally therapeutic practice approaches into service delivery.

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<sup>1</sup> Howie, J. with Cull, E., James, S. & Mallett, S., *Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2019.

[https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL\\_BetterFuturesFramework\\_Mar19\\_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829](https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL_BetterFuturesFramework_Mar19_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829)

<sup>2</sup> The Foyer Federation, *Inspiring young people to realise their power and purpose* <http://www.foyer.net> and *Inspire Chilli, the source for asset based innovation* <http://www.inspirechilli.com/>

We cannot ignore the need to advocate for improvements that will allow the program to support Aboriginal young people to flourish and achieve their potential. Hence the *Aboriginal Better Futures Development Project Report* includes an overview of the issues raised and recommendations for future program development in response. We trust that DFFH can draw on Aboriginal wisdom, evidence and experience to bolster funding and better support the capacity of ACCOs to deliver the Better Futures service in a way that meets the needs of Aboriginal young people.

## 1.4 Better Futures Our Way

Part 2 outlines the Aboriginal approach to Better Futures that we have called 'Better Futures Our Way'. In a nutshell, Better Futures Our Way is about ACCO based programs supporting young people to:

- connect with family and culture
- connect with their communities and local support networks
- access the practical help they need when transitioning to adulthood
- navigate the steps towards independence and a rewarding adult life.

### Further guidance

DFFH Better Futures Practice,  
<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>

The Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence  
[https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL\\_BetterFuturesFramework\\_Mar19\\_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829](https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL_BetterFuturesFramework_Mar19_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829)

A Better Futures Community Connections Practice Guide is under development and is expected to be available later in the year



## 2. Key Program Elements of Better Futures

### 2.1 Overview

Better Futures aims to support young people who are or have been in care to achieve successful and independent adult lives. It enables young people to have an active voice in decisions about their future and guides their transition to adulthood and independent living across a range of life areas, including:

- housing
- health and wellbeing
- living skills
- education & employment
- connections (including cultural and community connections)

### 2.2 Eligibility

Young people in foster care, kinship care, residential care and permanent care are eligible for Better Futures from the age of 15 years and 9 months if they are subject to:

- a family reunification order
- a care by Secretary order
- a long-term care order or
- a permanent care order

### Home Stretch Eligibility

Home Stretch is available to:

- Young people on a family reunification order, a care by secretary order or a long-term care order leaving care services from 16 years of age.
- Young people subject to permanent care orders and residing with their carers immediately prior to their 18th birthday.

Home Stretch service response commences after a young person's child protection order ceases for the final time (or in some circumstances after the cessation of other post order funding arrangements)

Eligible young people who have been approved for a TCP extension post child protection order may apply for Home Stretch, however, if approved, Home Stretch funding and support will not commence until after the TCP funding arrangement has ended.

During this period eligible young people residing in these arrangements can continue to access Better Futures service response.

Young people on interim accommodation orders and family preservation orders are not eligible for Better Futures or Home Stretch<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Better Futures eligibility and referral practice advice updated December 2021 <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-eligibility-and-referral-practice-advice>

## 2.3 Core Components

Better Futures has 3 core components:

1. Case work support, with levels of support that flex up and down according to the young person's needs
2. Information and advice
3. Flexible funding.

## 2.4 Home Stretch

The Home Stretch initiative is delivered via Better Futures and provides access to accommodation allowances, either as:

- allowances for young people from 18-21 who choose to move to independent or semi-independent housing options, including through the private rental market. This funding is brokered by Better Futures staff and allocated to young people to support them to live independently.
- allowances for carers of young people from 18-21 who elect to remain living *with* their foster, kinship or permanent carer. This allowance is paid directly to carers through the existing DFFH Allowance payment system.<sup>4</sup>

The Home Stretch funding is individually allocated for specific young people and so if the young person moves to another region, their funding moved with them. Neither allowance is paid if a young person chooses to return to their family of origin, however the young person would remain eligible for case work support and flexible funding via Better Futures.

To access Home Stretch, young people must be referred and linked to a Better Futures service. Once a young person is referred to Better Futures, the contracted Case Manager or Child Protection worker completes and submits the Home Stretch application in consultation with them.

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<sup>4</sup> See for example <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-carers>

## 2.5 Levels of Support

Better Futures is designed to provide a young person with a continuum of support starting when they are still in care and continuing on after they have left care. The level of support offered will depend on the circumstances of the young person and their support needs and the capacity of the Better Futures provider to which they have been referred. The three levels of support in Better Futures are called active support, limited support and active hold.

**Active Support** (also known as intensive support) can include:

- assisting a young person to achieve goals across the life areas of housing and living skills, education, employment, health and wellbeing, and community connections
- supporting an Aboriginal young person with connection to culture and community
- supporting independent living skills.

**Limited Support** (also known as sustained support) can include:

- assisting a young person with one-off practical support such as access to information about flexible funding
- advice and/or assistance with referrals to other support networks.

Young people on **Active Hold** can expect:

- a regular check-in, in person or via telephone from the Better Futures provider to see how they are going<sup>5</sup>. Check-ins may be between fortnightly and quarterly depending on individual circumstances and ACCO capacity).

The program design and funding model assumes that, at any one time, Better Futures teams will be working with some young people on 'active support', some on 'limited support' and some on 'active hold'. The model also assumes that the level of support needed by an individual young person will flex up and down during their time with Better Futures.

The funding provided to Better Futures programs is calculated in packages of hours (110, 40 and 10 hours per year) that match the three levels of support. **However the funding is pooled so there is no expectation that a set number of hours is provided to a young person referred to the program.** Instead, the level of support provided to an individual young person should be determined by the Better Futures worker and manager based on capacity within the program, and the needs of the young person as determined by assessment and consultation with them (and their care team if they are still in care).

'Active support' will involve more frequent contact and more hours. The hours of service provided are funded at around two hours a week on average with ACCOs reporting that provision of 6-8 hours per week for each young person is common.

and 'limited support' involves less frequent contact and fewer hours (1-2 hours per fortnight). 'Active hold' may involve check ins between monthly and quarterly.

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<sup>5</sup> Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Better Futures roles and responsibilities: Practice advice* updated December 2021 <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>

## 2.6 Secondary Consults to Care Teams

If a young person in care is still some time away from transitioning to independence, it is likely that Better Futures service provided will be at the 'limited support' level and will primarily take the form of secondary consultation to case managers and care teams. This enables young people who will be leaving care within the next 2-3 years to learn about Better Futures and get to know a worker.

During this phase, the usual role of the Better Futures worker is to:

- develop knowledge about the young person and commence building a relationship with them
- contribute the benefit of their own networks, contacts and expertise to help build a strong foundation for the young person
- advise on the young person's 15+ Care and Transition Plan and cultural support plan. Note: the development and implementation of these plans is the responsibility of the care services case manager while the young person is still in care
- support the young person to have an active voice in their transition planning and decisions about their future
- arrange access to flexible funding to support and prepare the young person for their transition from care to adulthood.

Some young people in care<sup>6</sup> will require 'active support'. If the young person remains on an order it would continue to be the responsibility of the contracted case manager to provide support, particularly if the young person is in crisis. However, there are circumstances where Aboriginal young people require more intensive support in the 'in care' space, for example where Better Futures can support connection to culture and Country.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.7 Practice Approaches

The approach that ACCOs use when working with young people is described in Section 4: *Better Futures Our Way*. This approach is based on the need to heal, protect and connect<sup>8</sup> and empower young people to identify and achieve their goals in a holistic, self-determined and Aboriginal-led way.

Another practice approach is the Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework that was developed by the Brotherhood of St Laurence. This framework is designed to support Better Futures workers (called Development Coaches in the Advantaged Thinking model) to practice and think in an 'Advantaged Thinking way'. The 'Advantaged Thinking way' involves engaging with young people using a strengths-based approach, recognising and building on their talents and aspirations, and assisting them to overcome challenges. The framework provides a range of tools and guidance on how to support young people and engage them in planning, goal setting and accessing opportunities across a range of life areas (called 'offers' in Advantaged Thinking).

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<sup>6</sup> A young person is 'in care' until the expiry of their final order. This can be up until the young person turns 18 years.

<sup>7</sup> This increases demand on ACCO service delivery, as mainstream providers are not expected to provide this intervention at such an early stage. ACCOs report that they are not typically able to provide intensive support while young people are in care, due to service demands.

<sup>8</sup> As described by the VACCA Cultural Therapeutic Ways approach

These life areas, which are considered critical to developing young people's capacity to achieve sustained, connected independence, are: education, housing and living skills, health and well-being, employment, and connections.

The 'Advantaged Thinking Way' aligns with the Aboriginal approach outlined in part 2 of this Guide in that it is strengths-based and supports self-determination. However, the Aboriginal cultural-centred approach as outlined in Part 2 should be considered as the leading approach for Aboriginal Better Futures providers. In addition, the Advantaged Thinking tools have been seen as too text heavy and not culturally appropriate by some ACCO Better Futures services. It is suggested, however, that ACCO Better Futures workers familiarise themselves with the framework, including the guidance and tools, and use these if they seem valuable to their practice.

### Further guidance

#### **Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework**

[https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL\\_BetterFuturesFramework\\_Mar19\\_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829](https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL_BetterFuturesFramework_Mar19_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829)

#### **Home Stretch fact sheet**

Updated December 2021

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-factsheet-word>

#### **Eligibility and referral**

Better Futures eligibility and referral Practice advice updated December 2021 outlines eligibility for Better Futures. Available at

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-eligibility-and-referral-practice-advice>

#### **Allocation and prioritisation**

Practice advice updated December 2021

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-allocation-and-prioritisation-practice-advice>

#### **Roles and responsibilities**

Better Futures roles and responsibilities: Practice advice updated December 2021

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-roles-and-responsibilities-practice-advice>

## 3. The Community Connections Component of Better Futures

### 3.1 About Community Connectors

In recognition of the importance of connections in moving young people to sustainable independence, the Better Futures service model includes a Community Connections component. This involves community services organisations being funded to provide a specific Community Connector role. Community Connectors aim to build supportive networks, pathways and connections for young people in their local community. They provide opportunities for young people to participate in civic, social, economic and cultural life in their community.

Community Connectors seek out and broker partnerships, networks and resources within local communities and with businesses to strengthen young people's social capital and community connectedness. The Connectors' work may include matching young people with an individual mentor based on their interests, goals and aspirations. Community Connectors do not provide case work, as this role sits with the Better Futures worker or the young person's case manager if the young person is in care services.

Groups in the community that the Community Connectors can link young people with include:

- community groups (for example arts, theatre, sport, recreation, rotary)
- Aboriginal programs and support services
- housing services
- youth, multicultural and disability specific organisations
- LGBTQIA+ support services
- local government
- local businesses (retail, services etc)
- philanthropic organisations
- education providers (TAFEs, Universities, local schools and training providers etc)
- Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs)
- local employers
- allied health and women's health organisations
- neighbourhood houses and Men's Sheds
- other organisations and agencies where a connection can benefit the young person.

When a young person and the Better Futures worker identify that Community Connections support is required, the Better Futures worker will make a referral to Community Connections. The Community Connector then matches a young person to a mentor or facilitates a connection to a community service, resource or opportunity. The Better Futures worker and the Community Connector work collaboratively to support a young person with these connections.

Community Connector roles operate in Community Service Organisations (CSOs) in each of the 17 DFFH areas. Note: VACCA Ovens Murray is also funded as a Community Connector.

However, resourcing to support the role is limited, resulting in part-time positions in several regional areas or single positions covering highly populated metropolitan areas or large geographic areas. A list of the Community Connections Services and the Local Government Areas they cover is provided in Appendix 1.

### 3.2 Community Connectors and Aboriginal Young People

ACCO Better Futures programs prioritise connecting young people with Aboriginal community and culture and may therefore question what a **mainstream** community connector could offer. It seems unfair and at odds with the government's support for Aboriginal self-determination that ACCOs are not funded to employ Community Connections workers. This is an issue that needs to be addressed and a recommendation for change is included in the *Aboriginal Better Futures Development Project Report*.

The current mainstream Community Connectors may however be able to support Aboriginal young people to connect to services and opportunities in their local communities in a range of ways. These may vary, from connecting a young person to a specific mentor to support their education and or employment, to connecting a young person to a specific course they are interested in or a social or recreational activity such as a sports club. There are some examples of Better Futures workers and Community Connectors working collaboratively to identify which connections suit the young person's interests and aspirations. Examples of good collaboration in practice include Community Connectors locating at ACCOs for a period of time or attending team meetings to better understand needs and highlight existing opportunities.

The following examples are provided to give ACCO workers a clearer sense of what mainstream Community Connectors provide. Most of these examples are taken from the Better Futures Community Connections Practice Guide under development.<sup>9</sup> This document outlines the underpinning theory of the Community Connections component and provides more detail on the practice of Community Connections services.

#### Example 1. Housing Forum in Western Melbourne Area

Young people transitioning from care services frequently don't forward plan, then face a crisis in their housing situation, and must turn to homelessness services. The Community Connector organised a housing forum for Better Futures providers in response to this problem, after Better Futures Development Coaches indicated that they needed to increase their knowledge about housing/living skills.

The Community Connector has partnered with two local housing providers, who in turn have secured the involvement of other housing organisations to increase the scope of the forum. One outcome was that Better Futures workers were given various contacts for housing support, enabling earlier planning with young people.

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<sup>9</sup> The Better Futures Community Connections Practice Guide is expected to be available later in 2023/24.

## Example 2 Partnering with Shepparton City Council

The Community Connector has established a strong connection with the local city council through monthly meetings. As a result, Council has developed a stronger awareness of the Better Futures program and understanding about young people transitioning from care. The meeting informs the Community Connector about up-and-coming Council events that present opportunities for young people. This collaboration has resulted in young people's involvement in the meals on wheels program, promoting intergenerational relationships and allowing them to give something back to the community.

## Example 3 Southern Trello Board Community Directory

The MOIRA Community Connector in Southern Metro has developed a comprehensive Trello Board. This is an online tool designed to collate and communicate information about local clubs, programs, events, services, organisations and businesses for young people. A significant benefit is that all local community information is stored in one easy to access digital location.

## Example 4 Partnership between Whitelion Youth Agency and Cardno Engineering

Whitelion supports young at risk people in the community with programs and advocacy. Cardno is an engineering firm with offices located in the Melbourne CBD. Cardno staff members across Metropolitan Melbourne have partnered with Whitelion to offer mentoring to young people through the Community Connections program. Currently there are mentors in both the West and East providing young people with role models and insights into new and different career paths. Mentors from Cardno are from a diverse range of ages and backgrounds, professions and experiences and can assist young people transitioning from care with guidance, social support and connections to industry.

## Example 5 Mentoring

A non-binary young person was referred to Community Connections. During the initial intake session, they stated that they would prefer a mentor from the LGBTQIA+ community, so that they could be themselves and connect more with the Queer community. The Whitelion Eastern Community Connector reached out to their professional and personal networks and recruited a non-binary mentor who could understand the young person's experience, provide a non-binary identity for the young person as they transitioned to independence and adulthood, and provide social connections.

The pair are still matched 10 months later, enjoying catching up. They have recently undertaken a baking activity together – cooking an orange poppy seed cake.

## Example 6 Linking with education

In Shepparton, the Community Connector arranges access for young people to the GoTafe Certificate 1 in Developing Independence, and the Shepparton Education First Youth Foyer.



### 3.3 How are Young People Referred to Community Connectors?

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

#### When should a Community Connections referral be made?

Community Connections referrals can be made when:

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

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

#### Steps in the referral process

The Better Futures worker:

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

#### Further guidance

##### Functions and responsibilities of Community Connectors

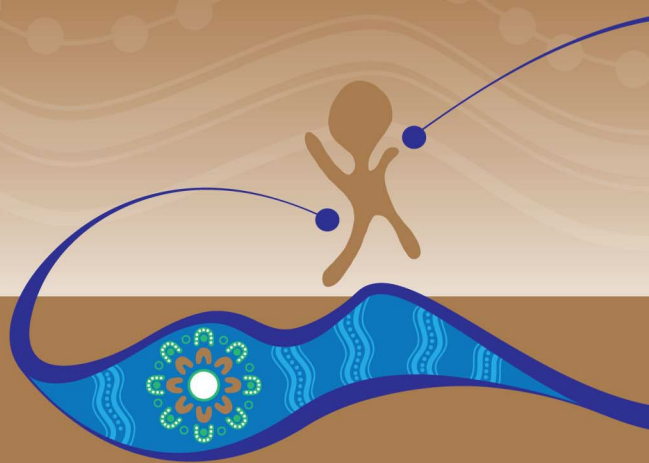
<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/community-connections-practice-advice>

##### Information on the Better Futures CRISSP referral and allocation process:

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-eligibility-and-referral-practice-advice>

Note: The Better Futures Community Connections Practice Guide is expected to be available in 2023/24

## Part 2: Better Futures Our Way



### 4.1 Introduction

This section provides guidance for managers and staff of ACCO Better Futures programs about Aboriginal culturally centred way of delivering Better Futures. The guidance is based on practice wisdom from those with experience and expertise who participated in consultation workshops as part of this project.

The approach employed by ACCOs is based on the need to heal, protect and connect (as described by the VACCA Cultural Therapeutic Ways approach), and to empower young people to identify and achieve their goals, in a holistic, self-determined and Aboriginal-led way. This empowerment is produced from:

- the unique understanding that practitioners bring to the task of working with Aboriginal young people
- specific practices and approaches that we know work best
- the types and skills of ACCO Better Futures staff
- the use of creative ideas to get good outcomes for our young people.

### 4.2 The Aboriginal Way – bringing a unique understanding

The Aboriginal way recognizes self-determination and cultural connection as central to healing and to supporting a successful transition from out-of-home care.

But more than just understanding the core principles of effective practice, we also understand the day-to-day realities and challenges experienced by Aboriginal young people leaving care. These can include family backgrounds of disadvantage, poverty, disability, mental illness and substance misuse. There can be personal experiences of abuse, sexual assault, neglect, unstable housing or homelessness, and family violence. Experiences of loss, grief and trauma can mean young people are more likely to misuse drugs and alcohol and have greater contact with the justice system. We also know Aboriginal young people are highly likely to have experienced multiple forms of racism and discrimination on a regular basis.

We know too many Aboriginal young people in out-of-home care have not been placed with family or supported to maintain relationships with family, including siblings. Many have not received adequate support to connect with culture throughout their care history.

We bring an understanding of the impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma and the Stolen Generations on the lives and experiences of Aboriginal young people. We use this understanding to build unique Aboriginal practice approaches which support young people to develop their own deeper understanding of their removal experiences, with reference to their family's intergenerational experiences of poverty, racism, dislocation and trauma.

### 4.3 The Aboriginal Way – Practices and Approaches that Work

An Aboriginal delivered approach uses the power of culture, a strengths-based approach and holistic service delivery. This respects the young people we work with and gives them a voice. Practices and approaches that we know work are set out below.

#### Connections to culture and community

An Aboriginal approach gives an opportunity for our young people to build their Aboriginal cultural identity, ensuring they feel the pride and strength of belonging to culture. Culture and community are incorporated as supportive, healing and protective factors in all service delivery areas.

We seek to link young people with health and healing programs and services that are holistic, using therapeutic approaches based on incorporation of culture. We recognize that cultivating a sense of this cultural distinctiveness is inextricably linked with spiritual, emotional and social health and wellbeing<sup>10</sup>. Staff may arrange a Return to Country or organise activities on Country (such as Cultural camps) as they know such support builds Aboriginal young people's cultural identity, personal development, and connection to family, kin and Country. These activities impact positively on Aboriginal young people's physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological health & wellbeing.

Culturally grounded practice is fostered through Aboriginal Elders and facilitators engaging with young people in a range of culturally rich activities. These may be yarning and storytelling, smoking ceremonies, didgeridoo making, traditional wood carving, possum skin cloak making, basket weaving, jewelry making, traditional dance and other art and craft activities. Elders and mentors can open the way to cultural ceremonies and events that encourage a strong sense of identity, belonging, self-esteem, confidence and pride.

Across each of the service areas (or offers) - of education, housing and living skills, health and well-being, employment and connections - there is an emphasis on restoring, reaffirming and renewing a sense of pride in cultural identity, connection to country and participation in community. In the education area, for example, Better Futures staff support educational pathways for Aboriginal young people through linking with the Aboriginal Liaison Worker at TAFE or University, and with Koorie Education Centres or Koorie Engagement Support Officers KESOs at schools or Lookout Centres. Staff may also link young people to traineeships within ACCOs and Aboriginal identified positions within a field the young person is interested in. Staff can source educational opportunities that build on the creative strengths that are part of Aboriginal culture and build confidence to pursue further creative endeavors.

The sense of belonging to the Aboriginal Community is vital. The yearning to connect and belong was particularly evident for our Aboriginal young people in Better Futures during recent COVID-19 lockdowns. Community based supports can ease the isolation and loneliness young people may experience.

There are a range of ways Better Futures workers can foster Community involvement. Young people can meet, develop relationships with and learn from Aboriginal Elders, Aboriginal leaders and other positive role models and mentors who are strong in culture, observe cultural protocols

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<sup>10</sup> Healing Foundation, Our children, our dreaming, 2013 <https://www.snaicc.org.au/our-children-our-dreaming-2013-the-healing-foundation-gaticcp-absec-and-snaicc-discussion-paper/>

and model healthy lifestyles and respectful relationships. If young people feel welcome to simply visit the ACCO offices and become familiar with their local Gathering Place and its personnel, they can have a yarn with staff and Community members and build community connections and linkages.

The Better Futures worker has an important role in advocating for cultural support plans to be central to transition planning and in providing advice in meetings about opportunities to connect Aboriginal young people to their culture and community. Workers also advocate for regular review of Cultural Support Plans are whether recommendations are being implemented.

### **Creative Practice Example: Connecting with culture**

Young men being assisted through the Home Stretch program were given the opportunity to connect with an Elder versed in an ancient Aboriginal custom of healing. In sessions held on the beach, the group was immersed in the rhythmic, primal sounds of the Yidaki (didgeridoo). The sound of the Yidaki moves through muscles and organs, grounding you in the land and the moment as the frequencies and vibrations flow through your body, connecting you to the earth and creating a space for powerful healing to take place.

### **Creative Practice Examples: Flexible funding**

Each young person new to the VACCA Better Futures program receives a welcome pack with items from Aboriginal retailers, including clothing, a towel and stationery and an Aboriginal flag to display in their homes. Young people moving into independent living are offered the opportunity to choose and purchase Aboriginal artwork by local artists, or an artist from their mob to connect their home to their identity.

### Creative Practice Examples:

A Better Futures team set up a female mentor strong in her culture for a young woman. Mentoring was done through phone calls; text messages and regular emotional support was provided as well as assistance to join a local gym.

### Creative Practice Examples: Flexible funding

Flexible funding was used to buy an iPad for a young person doing therapy online.

## Services are culturally safe

As staff working in ACCOs, we are aware of the importance of creating cultural safety for all our clients. Cultural safety is about creating an environment for Aboriginal people where there is no assault on, challenge to or denial of their identity and experience. Staff understand that some of the young people in Better Futures may have only recently discovered that they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Staff respect that each young person is at a different stage of their cultural journey. Staff understand they build young people's connections to culture on a case by case basis.

Better Futures services provide a culturally safe space for Elders, mentors and staff as well as for young people. Young people's Aboriginality and unique status as First People is acknowledged and celebrated. Reference points to culture are made available during meetings. These could be a possum skin, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag, artwork or gum leaves. These reference points are visible at ACCO work sites and encouraged during all meetings.

In addition, the Better Futures program strives to have no barriers to access by:

- ensuring all programs are conducted in informal, non-threatening settings
- providing all services at no cost
- presenting all information in plain, accessible English
- encouraging Aboriginal young people to attend and self-advocate in their own care team meetings, to help empower them. They are also encouraged to bring a support person or family member if needed
- prioritising Cultural awareness training for non-Aboriginal staff.

## Services are culturally sensitive, and trauma informed

The high level of trauma that young people in care may have been experienced means that the Aboriginal Better Futures approach must initially focus on building a safe working relationship with the young person. This relationship enables better understanding of the young person's needs, and how best to support them to move forward. This often requires a higher level of skill in connecting and engaging than for a non-Aboriginal approach applied under Better Futures.

Culturally sensitive trauma informed approaches are built into our service delivery. We incorporate Aboriginal practice approaches to support young people develop a deeper understanding of their removal experiences, with reference to their family's intergenerational experiences. Historical and transgenerational trauma and its impacts on individuals and families, and the extent of trauma inherent in Aboriginal communities, are discussed and addressed within a cultural therapeutic framework. In tandem with being trauma informed, our practice understands and is shaped by the developmental impact of neglect and abuse on the child. When young people share their feelings of grief, loss and trauma, appropriate support is always available.

In understanding young people's experiences and trauma histories and circumstances, staff also appreciate what might be triggering. For example, it can be confronting for a young person to be involved in completing a Cultural Support Plan as they may not have had any family contact. We know that there may be trauma and disadvantage within a young person's broader network that mean they do not have options such as short-term places to stay with family or friends, and how distressing this may be.

## Early, strong engagement to support successful transitions

Engagement is all about relationships. The relationship between a young person and their Better Futures worker is a key factor in determining the ongoing engagement and the value the young person puts on continued program participation. The comradery and mentorship born from matching an Aboriginal client with an ACCO worker is a powerful outcome of ACCOs providing involvement in Better Futures.

Our young people, particularly those whose out of home car is not being handled by an ACCO, may prefer early engagement and regular contact with a Better Futures worker while they are still in care. The young person may see the Better Futures worker as more 'outside the system' than a child protection worker or CSO based case manager. Though this may require more worker time, the contact can provide the opportunity to build a strong, valuable relationship with the young person before they leave care.

A relationship-based approach also means partnering with young people's families, communities, professionals, and other services. Our Better Futures workers advocate for the Aboriginal young person with the care team, to ensure that Cultural Support Plans are culturally driven and in line with self-determination principles. Workers ensure the young person's voice is being heard and shapes goals developed. When a worker leaves Better Futures, it is important that a careful and thoughtful transfer to another worker takes place.

**Practice tip:** Engage early and more intensively initially, be consistent, incorporate the young person's interests and get creative!

## A holistic approach

Having a broad understanding of the experiences of and challenges for Aboriginal care leavers reminds us of the importance of interventions that respect this understanding and see the young person's needs holistically.

We do holistic assessments of each young person's physical, emotional, social, spiritual, cultural and wellbeing needs and use this when we work with young people to develop their goals and plans. Assessments with young people also respect and reflect a range of personal and community factors including identity, mob, geography, age, ability, gender, sexuality, parenting and caring responsibilities, family, spiritual beliefs, language, and economic status.

In addition to connecting with Aboriginal culture and community, our programs wrap support around the young people across the five Better Futures service domains: housing and living skills; health and wellbeing; education; employment; and broader community connections. We link young people with a range of services, including health services, housing support, family violence programs and mental health support that are community based and culturally safe.

## Strength-based assessments and approach

The Aboriginal way of working is based on a strengths-based approach. Each young person has their own personal and family history and life experience, and we listen to the voice of each young person to understand them and their strengths.

Strengths based practice has a focus on building on skills and proficiency rather than focusing on problems and shortcomings. The worker looks for and acknowledges what young people do well and helps them build on what works to overcome problems.

The Aboriginal way does not make assumptions, stereotype, blame or shame young people or their families. However, working in a way that is strengths-based and underpinned by culture way does not mean avoiding difficult conversations or not challenging unhelpful behavior and practices.

**Practice tip:** Take the time to yarn with the young person about where they've come from, where they are now and where they'd like to go. This yarn can then form the first step in the young person setting goals that are meaningful to them.

Assessments with young people that are strengths-based will draw on client capacities including coping mechanisms, resilience and support systems.

## Open communication

Our programs incorporate Aboriginal ways of communicating - being open, transparent and respectful at all times. Open communication seeks to explore and understand the young person's context, validating good intentions and encouraging responsibility, rather than blaming.

Each worker needs to find a way of communicating that feels comfortable to them. This may reflect the role of Aunt, Uncle or older cousin.

**Practice tip:** Having to complete a form may be intimidating for a young person. Forms can be completed by the young person and the worker together. Or the young person might find it easier to take the form and complete it in their own time. Ask each young person what they prefer.

Yarning is a term used by Aboriginal people to mean a talk or conversation, where stories are shared, and knowledge is developed<sup>11</sup>. Yarning is a great way to connect and communicate and can help reduce the power imbalance between young person and worker. We use a yarning approach when meeting with young people to capture their own journey/narrative, their own history, concerns, protective factors, hopes and ambitions for the future.

More information about Aboriginal ways of communicating can be found in Appendix 2.

## Family connections

Better Futures workers can also have an important role in exploring and strengthening family relationships. This can include parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, cousins and siblings and broader extended family relationships.

Sibling relationships can be the most enduring relationships we have across our lives. Yet many young people in out-of-home care are not placed with their siblings. Supporting young people to have positive, stable connections with family and community, helps create a supportive social network.

Workers play an important role in advocating to Child Protection that they obtain a Certificate of Aboriginality on behalf of a young person

**Practice tip:** Involve the young person in a yarn about who in their family and/or community they would like to connect with, reconnect, or strengthen their relationship with.

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<sup>11</sup> To read more about yarning, a useful article is: Bessarab, D and Ngandu, B, "Yarning as a legitimate method in indigenous research" in International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies, 2010; 3:37–50.



## Emphasizing education and life skills

Education and training provide pathways to employment and future income to support independent living. Education and training also build young people's self-esteem and hope for the future.

However young people living in out-of-home care are at much greater risk of poorer educational outcomes than those in the broader community, including:

- poor school attendance and engagement
- failing to develop foundational educational skills and reaching expected benchmarks
- disengaging from compulsory schooling
- not achieving academic qualifications.

The result can often be reduced employment opportunities and higher risk of disadvantage and poverty.

What this greater risk means is that, for Aboriginal young people who are transitioning from care, education and training need a strong emphasis and must be a critical part of planning for the future.

Appendix 3 Provides a list of resources and tools to assist young people to be supported and engaged in education.

### **Creative practice Example: Supporting young people to gain work-ready confidence and skills**

The VACCA North Better Futures team has been working with VACCA's Senior Education Project Officer to create opportunities for young people in the program to gain confidence and skills. One opportunity is engaging young people in a Work Ready Program facilitated by Bridge Darebin and codesigned by VACCA. The program runs for 5 weeks and includes writing a resume and cover letter and participating in a mock interview. At the end of 5 weeks, the young people will have the opportunity to complete a food handling certificate and work experience at the café run by Bridge Darebin.

Staff also provide opportunities for young people to develop everyday life skills, and adopt strong Aboriginal values and principles, in preparation for a fulfilling life as a proud and resilient Aboriginal person.

### **Creative Practice Example: Setting up a female mentor**

Southern VACCA set up a female mentor strong in her culture for a young woman. Mentoring was done through phone calls; text messages and regular emotional support was provided as well as assistance to join a local gym

**Practice tip:** Multiple goals can be achieved at the same time, for example, a cooking course being run on the traditional Aboriginal lands supports meeting a living skills goal and a return to Country

## Embedding self-determination in all aspects of our service

Support for young people to gain or have agency (a sense of control) over their daily lives and active involvement shaping their journey is at the heart of the self-determined approach within Better Futures. Each young person is at the centre of the case management process and is actively involved in developing plans, capturing their hopes and goals and identifying the supports they require. Goals and outcomes are reviewed regularly and are revised according to the young person's changing circumstances and progress. Planning and decision making processes are shared openly. Aboriginal Better Futures staff also understand the need to walk a fine line between providing support and respecting a young person's choices and level of readiness to achieve particular goals.

VACCA's 'Child's Voice' booklet explains the importance of working with Aboriginal children and young people on their own terms. It states:

*Aboriginal children are part of families and communities that have historically not had a voice and continue to be denied the right to self-determination...The experience Aboriginal children have with you – your ability to engage with them, build trust and act wisely on what they say – will directly impact on their development, self-esteem, identity and capacity to develop a proud and loud Aboriginal voice<sup>12</sup>*

## Safety paramount for young people and staff

Transitioning from care is a challenging time for young people and involves risks including homelessness, social isolation, disengagement from school and deterioration of mental and or physical health. These risks must be assessed, and plans developed in response.

While Better Futures is not a crisis response service, workers need to be alert to the need for safety plans and appropriate referrals for young people at risk of harm. This could be risks of family violence, overdose if using substances, sexual health problems, unplanned pregnancy, self-harm or harm to others. If a young person discloses family violence a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) screening needs to be undertaken and a safety plan developed with the young person. A secondary consult should be obtained from a family violence practitioner within the ACCO. The Better Futures team can identify who within or outside the ACCO can provide assistance and guidance with risk assessments and safety planning.

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<sup>12</sup>Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency & Australian Catholic University, Child's Voice, Canberra, 2009, p. 2. Available at: [https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/Childs\\_Voice\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/Childs_Voice_Booklet.pdf)

Practitioners understand that risk can change and needs to be monitored and assessed throughout a young person's participation in Better Futures. Similarly, when safety plans are developed, they need to be designed with the young person, regularly revisited and reviewed and where possible shared with the care team.

A safety assessment must be part of planning for all activity within the program. Plans for group activities, for example, must consider whether involving some young people will impact negatively on others.

Worker safety also needs to be considered. Responding to the health, safety and wellbeing needs of staff is a core management responsibility of the ACCOs and an essential element in effective service provision.

## Staying connected after Better Futures

Closure needs to be planned and discussed with the young person early and often. A key aspect of planned closure is ensuring the young person remains engaged with the required health, education and community services, and cultural programs that meet their needs. Maintaining connections to places and people of cultural significance for the young person - whether that be Elders, their local Gathering Place, an ACCO or ACCHO, or on Country - need to be strongly encouraged leading up to closure

Cultural and community connections built during the young person's involvement in Better Futures can and should have longer term significance for the young person. These connections play an important role in helping young people maintain stability and progress, beyond Better Futures. They are an important source of earlier intervention support when needs arise and help break the cycle of crisis driven intervention. Ongoing connection with their local ACCO is important and the young person should understand that they can stay connected with the Better Futures team even when they are no longer a Better Futures client. ACCOs 'keep the door open' for young people to come in for a cuppa. They adopt a 'no wrong door' approach whereby the young person knows they can walk through the door any time and receive some form of support, even if just a contact number or assistance with a referral or application.

## 4.4 Staff

### Staff skills and attributes

Attracting and retaining the right staff is a high priority.

Effective service delivery for Aboriginal young people depends on having a capable and culturally competent team of staff who can develop trusting relationships with young people and with community. Staff must be able to create a culturally and emotionally safe environment in which individuals are respected and valued and cultural respect is demonstrated. They must be able to support young people to connect to Community and safely explore their cultural and broader identity.

Staff must also be able to work cross-culturally and communicate effectively with program participants and other stakeholders. We prioritise the employment of Aboriginal staff who are critically important role models to show young people what they can achieve.

## Supporting workers

We pay attention to the factors that are known to contribute to health, wellbeing and staff retention in ACCOs. These include bi-directional communication, teamwork and collaboration, cultural safety, supervision, professional advancement and recognition.<sup>13</sup>

We also understand that our Better Futures workers are at risk of experiencing high rates of stress, burnout and vicarious trauma in their job due to the demands and nature of the role. Pressure results from staff knowing the significant role they play in young people's lives, and that other staff cannot easily move into the role when a break or change is needed. There may also be obligations and expectations on individual workers from members of the broader Community.

In addition, there are high levels of trauma, grief and loss in the Aboriginal community which are reflected in Aboriginal workplaces and in the lives of individual workers. Staff need support to deal with this stress, trusting and respectful relationships in the workplace, acknowledgement of the overlap in staff and community roles and the tensions that can result, and strong and supportive leadership.

Staff appreciate flexible working arrangements, access to culturally centred wellbeing activities/programs, opportunities to connect to culture and country through wellbeing days, and support to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Access to support or counselling via the Employee Assistance Program allows staff to work through issues as needed instead of having to leave their personal issues 'at the door'.

Better Futures staff also require support to undertake their roles in the form of:

- clear communication about Better Futures and Home Stretch for themselves, young people and carers including client centred and culturally safe pamphlets targeted at Aboriginal young people and their carers
- clearly described program guidelines and requirements
- a range of culturally appropriate practice tools and forms
- regular in service training tailored to ACCOs
- cultural healing and development opportunities
- an Aboriginal Community of Practice
- guidance and up to date information about local supports for young people – in particular crisis support and housing services
- opportunities to participate in reflective practice and access cultural supervision and mentoring.

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<sup>13</sup> Deroy, S, Schütze, H, "Factors supporting retention of health and wellbeing staff in Aboriginal health services: a strength-based case study" in Human Resources for Health 19, 35 (2021) <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12960-021-00557-4>

## 4.5 Creative Ideas

### New staffing arrangements

ACCOs have developed a variety of Better Futures staffing models to address pressures on workers. These include:

- sharing support: young people are case managed by more than one worker so a relationship with them is shared, and staff can also support each other
- concentrating the administration role: one worker focuses on administration and compliance for the whole team, for example doing particular CRIS/SP inputting tasks
- creating a specialised programs role: an allocated 'programs person' is responsible for living skills and group work
- partnering with other programs: workers partner with staff from other ACCO programs and link young people with services they offer, for example adolescent family violence groups and youth camps. Running joint programs or using programs already being run by other ACCO programs is an efficient way to help young people learn and grow, freeing up worker time for other things.

### Using groups and classes

ACCO based youth groups have potential to meet the needs of some young people. Offering the support of a group might be appealing to the young person, knowing they are not alone in their journey to independence. Peer support can be an additional layer of support for young people to help them navigate different situations, to know that they are not the only ones in the situation, and reduce risk of social isolation for the short and longer term. Sharing stories can identify strategies that will help others navigate particular situations. Setting up groups is time consuming initially but, once arrangements are in place, they can be an efficient way of engaging.

There are also external community groups that young people can be linked to. Better Futures workers can inform a young person about external groups or refer them to their local Better Futures Community Connector. Every community will have a different range of group programs running at any given time, some operating all-year-round and others for a limited time. We are mindful that often Aboriginal young people may be reluctant to attend mainstream group programs or services as they are largely less culturally sensitive or safe.

Groups can include:

- cultural camps
- cooking classes
- financial life skills such as how to do budgeting, use an ATM, do online banking etc.
- groups for events with guest speakers (e.g., from Centrelink, real estate agents, the Koorie midwife, Koorie Justice workers)
- a Koorie Maternal and Child Health Nurse teaching about the birthing process, infant feeding, safe sleeping education etc
- pregnancy yoga
- a photo shoot with an Aboriginal photographer
- canoe trips

### Creative Practice Example: Group Work

VACCA Southern has established a Better Futures Young Mums Group to connect young Aboriginal mums with each other and culture. They have discussed baby care, self-care and protective factors that keep families together. The women received a possum skin and an Aboriginal photographer photographed the women with possum skins and ochre. Other activities included shopping for maternity wear, pregnancy yoga, essential oils, and two sessions with a doula.

Section 3 provides more information about Community Connectors and how they can be accessed.

**Practice tip:** As a Better Futures team, brainstorm a list of possible opportunities that provide positive life experiences in Community for each young person. Examples might include a group trip to the footy, getting involved in NAIDOC events, a visit to Country or joining a local cultural program.

Appendix 4 provides further discussion about groups that may be available in the community for Better Futures clients.

Appendix 5 lists resources relevant to Better Futures service delivery.

## 4.6 Advocating for Change

Our role is to advocate for the young people we work with at an individual level. However, ACCOs also have a long and proud tradition of advocating for our young people, families and communities collectively and we will continue to call for changes that are needed so Better Futures can be delivered in the Aboriginal way as described above and be the most responsive and effective program it can be for Aboriginal young people.

In the *Aboriginal Better Futures Development Project Report*, we set out changes that we need to see, based on our experience with the program so far. These include improvements such as smaller caseloads, more staffing and resourcing, earlier engagement with young people, funding for ACCOs to provide Community Connections, and better training and support for ACCO Better Futures workers, especially our new workers growing into the role.

### Resources

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency & Australian Catholic University (ACU) 2009, *Child's Voice*, Canberra

[https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/Childs\\_Voice\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/Childs_Voice_Booklet.pdf)

Headspace, Assessing and responding to safety concerns

<https://headspace.org.au/professionals-and-educators/health-professionals/resources/assessing-safety/>



## Part 3: Procedures, Tools and Forms

This section outlines the key procedures for the different aspects of the Better Futures program and provides links to further guidance and forms.

The program aspects covered within this section include:

- referrals
- assessing support needs
- providing secondary consultation for young people in care
- home stretch
- use of Flexible Funding
- reporting and compliance
- Better Futures Tools and Forms.

### 5.1 Referrals

The Better Futures model promotes early referrals, during the time in out of home care, so that all eligible young people are aware of and are linked to a support service for when they leave care. Early referrals also provide Better Futures workers the opportunity to offer secondary consultations to care teams for the young person during their time in care. Secondary consultations can assist in the development and implementation of Cultural Support Plans, 15+ Care and Transition Plans and in ensuring the young person has self-determination.

A young person is referred to Better Futures at 15 years and 9 months by their case manager via the Client Relationship Information System/Service Providers (CRIS/SP).

Case managers follow the following steps when making a referral to Better Futures:

1. The child protection case manager, contracted case manager (kinship or foster care), residential care or TCP case manager/ key worker) or Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care (ACAC) case manager determines that a young person is eligible for a referral to Better Futures as they are aged 15 years and 9 months.
2. The case manager discusses a Better Futures referral with the young person, engaging them in the process and obtaining their verbal consent to the referral. (Note: This is not required and does not always occur (but is 'best practice').
3. The case manager sends a Referral for Service via the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) to the relevant Better Futures provider, attaching the 15+ Care and Transition Plan and other relevant documentation. This additional documentation should include:
  - the referral forms
  - the Cultural Support Plan
  - the client overview document
  - documentation of any areas of concern
  - the actions table from the case plan
  - the placement referral document
  - the care and placement plan
  - the assessment and progress record
  - the essential information record
  - health or education assessments
  - any individual education plan
  - any NDIS plan
  - case meeting minutes
  - contracted case management quarterly report
  - any information regarding security alerts or safety risks and Behaviour /Therapeutic Support Plans.

The referral form needs to be completed comprehensively so that critical information is considered in the handover to the ACCO Better Futures Worker. If these forms are not completed while the young person is still in care, there is often a great deal of work that the Better Futures worker needs to do to simply fill in the gaps of the client's file (for example gathering Essential Information and completing Cultural Support Plans). As the last worker to come on line working with the young person, the Better Futures worker often provides the last chance for a young person to have their essential information gathered. In many cases, particularly where a young person's Out of Home Care placement has been case managed outside of an ACCO, Cultural Support Plans must be a high priority because young people often present as culturally isolated, with little connection to or knowledge of their Aboriginal family and community.



## Referrals for Young People on Permanent Care Orders

VACCA has been engaged as the key agency to refer Aboriginal young people on permanent care orders into Better Futures programs. VACCA will refer young people to an ACCO<sup>14</sup> for Better Futures and Home Stretch support.<sup>15</sup>

### Self-Referrals

A young person may have left care some time ago or moved to a new location and may not have established links with a Better Futures provider. These young people might self-refer to Better Futures, and in these circumstances the provider should:

- confirm the young person's eligibility for Better Futures via CRISSP
- create a new CRISSP case if the young person is determined eligible
- provide details of the referral at the local allocations meeting to ensure necessary records are updated.

### Acceptance of referrals

Upon receipt of a referral and all required supporting documentation, the Better Futures provider completes the following steps within 5 working days:

1. They confirm that the young person is eligible
2. Referral panels held, and referrals allocated, where necessary.
3. They then accept the referral on CRIS/SP (Note: ACCOs may decide not to accept the referral until further documentation is provided)
4. They undertake an initial assessment to determine the right service response, drawing on information provided by the referrer including:
  - the referral form
  - the 15+ Care and Transition Plan
  - the Cultural Support Plan (where relevant)
  - other documentation including the Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) client overview, recorded areas of concern, and the actions table from the case plan
  - any other critical information included in the comments section of the CRIS referral such as security alerts or safety risks, Behaviour Support Plan / Therapeutic Support Plan

A referral should not be accepted until the required information and documents are provided by the case worker. Accepting a referral without the necessary documentation can place the Better Future worker and / or the Aboriginal young people at risk because relevant information required for support and future planning is missing. CRIS/SP 'disallows' referrals that do not have the complete documentation. Generally, where referrals do not have the required information, the Better Futures worker should reach out to Child Protection or the CSO or ACAC service to discuss the relevant information required and/or ask to attend a care team meeting to obtain the relevant information regarding risk. It is important to note that sometimes the risks are not always evident at the point of referral.

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<sup>14</sup> Young people are also given the choice of ACCO or mainstream service provider, so as to ensure agency in service provision.

<sup>15</sup> Note: Referrals do not come directly to VACCA in all regions. There may be other ACCOs involved and an intake panel needs to occur, to determine which service should accept the referral.

The referral may not be accepted until all relevant documentation is received and assessed. However, in practice ACCOs often commence work without all (or occasionally any) documentation due to the urgent needs of a young person.

## Allocating a Better Futures worker

The team leader allocates a Better Futures worker, who then contacts the referrer to:

- seek further information about the young person
- clarify roles and responsibilities of the Better Futures worker and the existing case worker
- determine the level of support to be provided to the young person, based on their circumstances and needs, and the capacity of the organisation to meet demand.

Alternatively, the Better Futures Team Leader will do all of this work before allocating, to ensure the allocated worker has enough capacity to meet demands. Under this scenario, the Team Leader meets the CP worker/Care Team and assess the support level needed, and then allocates to a worker.

### Forms and further guidance

Further practice advice can be found at:

#### **Eligibility and referral**

Better Futures eligibility and referral Practice advice updated December 2021 available at <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-eligibility-and-referral-practice-advice>

#### **Allocation and prioritisation**

Better Futures allocation and prioritisation, Practice advice updated December 2021 <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-allocation-and-prioritisation-practice-advice>

## 5.2 Assessing Support Needs

### Information, Practice Guidance and Links

On receiving the referral (via CRIS to CRIS/SP) for a young person in Out of Home Care reaching the age of 15 years and 9 months, an initial assessment about the level of support to be provided is made. This initial decision may be based on the 15+ Care and Transition Plan and other accompanying documentation. However, where documentation is incomplete, or there are concerns that it is inaccurate, assessments about support needs should be made after attending a Care Team meeting, to explicitly discuss the needs of a young person.

The type of support to be provided can be active support, limited support or active hold (see Section 2). A Better Futures support plan will be developed, incorporating regular review and progress points and involving the active voice of the young person.

However, the Better Futures model recognises that a young person's support needs may change as they transition from care towards independence. They may need to receive different levels of support through Better Futures until their 21st birthday.

## Assessing support required

The 15+ transition plan, referral form and Cultural Support Plan are used to assess the support required. The Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework (see link below) produced by the Brotherhood of St Laurence also provides templates that can be used in planning support.

## Reviewing support levels

Levels of support should be reviewed by the Better Futures Worker, other practitioners and service providers during supervision or planning meetings. The young person can help to inform this support review process by using the Where Am I Now plan, another template to be found in the Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework.

The Framework states that there is not one single Better Futures support plan, but that planning resources, such as the templates noted, can ensure a plan addresses the young person's needs and is used to make sure their voice is directing their own planning and support needs.

## Young people in crisis

Some young people require a level of support beyond the scope of the Better Futures worker role. This may be due to past or current crisis or family violence issues. Where support is beyond the capacity of the Better Futures program, the Better Futures worker will help arrange alternative ACCO or community support such as through mental health, family violence, drug and alcohol or homelessness programs.

While in care, the responsibility for the immediate safety of the young person rests with Child Protection/Nugel (ACAC). Better Futures workers should direct concerns to the relevant child protection/Nugel (ACAC) practitioner so they can take the lead on providing or arranging crisis support.

### Forms and further guidance

#### **The Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework**

[https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL\\_BetterFuturesFramework\\_Mar19\\_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829](https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL_BetterFuturesFramework_Mar19_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829)

#### **The Better Futures levels of support**

Practice advice updated December 2021 provides case studies showing when each level of support is appropriate.

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>

#### **Better Futures roles and responsibilities**

Practice advice updated December 2021

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-roles-and-responsibilities-practice-advice>

## 5.3 Providing Secondary Consultation

### Information, Practice Guidance and Links

While young people are still in care, the role of the Better Futures worker can be to provide secondary consultations to the young person's case manager and care team.

This secondary consultation can:

- ensure the care team discuss the leaving care plan frequently, to reduce the risk of homelessness at 18
- help the care team, including the young person where appropriate, to identify goals and actions for inclusion in the 15+ Care and Transition plan. Goals and actions can relate to housing, living skills, education, employment and training, health and wellbeing, and community connections
- advocate for cultural plans to be central to transition planning
- facilitate access to flexible funding to support the implementation of the 15+ Care and Transition Plan
- introduce relevant cultural resources and tools into the care team setting to assist planning and encourage the young person to voice their goals and aspirations
- provide advice about opportunities for a young person to engage in education or work experience, join a sporting club or volunteer at a community group
- consider a referral to the local Better Futures Community Connections organisation
- advise on opportunities to connect Aboriginal young people to their culture and community, with a strong focus on mentoring and establishing positive connections with Elders
- advise on how to combine cultural planning and building living skills into the same event or activity
- provide information and advice about Home Stretch.

The level of secondary consultation is determined by the circumstances of the young person and the Better Futures provider's capacity.

The Better Futures worker does not assume lead responsibility for support whilst the young person is subject to a statutory order. Rather, the case manager leads the transition planning process, and all care team members share responsibility for preparing the young person to transition to independence.

Support from the Better Futures worker will gradually increase as the young person prepares to transition from care, usually around six months prior to the end of their order. The Better Futures worker also needs to be aware of circumstances where an order might end suddenly, such as if a Family Reunification Order ceases, so that they are able to increase their supports proactively.

There is often pressure on ACCO Better Futures workers to take on a more active or lead role in care teams and young people readily gravitate to and build rapport with ACCO workers, especially if they are Aboriginal. To realise the natural and important benefits of an Aboriginal response to Aboriginal young people, care teams often require a high level of cultural guidance and support. This can result in support at the Active level rather than Limited Support or Active Hold level.

Frequently, the Better Futures worker needs to provide direct support to a young person in care. This is likely to be in situations where support is needed to engage/re-engage with education, training and/or employment, or to support community connections where a young person is at risk of social isolation upon leaving care.

The care team meetings provide the ACCO Better Futures worker with opportunities for information exchange and engagement. The worker can inform the young person and other professionals in the team about their role as the ACCO Better Futures worker and what supports they can offer the young person as they transition towards independence and adulthood. Meetings also provide the opportunity for the Better Futures worker to start to engage with the young person.

## Young people in crisis

While in care, the responsibility for the immediate safety of the young person rests with Child Protection. Better Futures workers should direct concerns to the relevant child protection practitioner so they can take the lead on providing or arranging crisis support.

## Preparing documentation for the young person

The documents that need to be completed while the young person is still in care are:

- the Cultural Support Plan
- the Looking After Children 15+ Care and Transition Plan
- the essential information record, which should include their Medicare card and birth certificate
- the Certificate of Aboriginality and passport (These can be difficult to obtain post care because passport application now requires a parent's birth certificate or passport to prove citizenship status.)

### Further guidance

**Better Futures roles and responsibilities:** Practice advice updated December 2021

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-roles-and-responsibilities-practice-advice>

### Home Stretch

Practice advice is at

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch>

## 5.4 Home Stretch

### Home Stretch Applications

The Home Stretch application form (CRIS/CRISSP) must be submitted by the child protection case manager, contracted case manager, or the ACAC case manager. The Better Futures worker must support the application and applications will be rejected if the Better Futures worker or provider has not been involved in the decision to apply for Home Stretch.

## 5.5 Use of Flexible Funding

### Information, Practice Guidance and Links

Flexible funding is available to young people in Better Futures, including those accessing Home Stretch (Home Stretch has own Flexible Funding allocation), to assist with expenses for education, employment, health (where not covered by Medicare), and activities which assist their transition to independent living. Better Futures flexible funding should be used to support the achievement of goals that directly relate to the young person's transition to independence.

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

Note: Flexible Funding should only be utilised once all other appropriate funding options have been exhausted, including: Child Protection/ACAC funding; Caregiver payments; TILA; HEAI; and TCP etc.

Some examples of what Flexible Funding can be used for are set out below:

#### **Creative practice example 1:**

With the goal of supporting young people to access education and employment, arrangements are made and funding provided for a young people in the Better Futures program to take a set of ten driving lessons.

#### **Creative practice example 2:**

With the goal of supporting them during the COVID lockdowns, young people are assisted to set up online shopping delivery, are funded for a subscription to the delivery service and provided with grocery vouchers.

#### **Further guidance**

**Better Futures roles and responsibilities:** Practice advice updated December 2021  
<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-roles-and-responsibilities-practice-advice>

## 5.6 Reporting and Compliance

### Information, Practice Guidance and Links

Better Futures service delivery is monitored, on a monthly basis, through reporting on a range of targeted 'activities'. The activities that each organisation is required to report on are listed in its service agreement and captured within the 'Service Delivery Tracking' (SDT) portal.

### What is reported

Information is collected on intake and access, support service hours and expenditure.

#### ***Intake and Access***

This reporting activity only applies to intake and access service delivery provided by the Leaving Care Hotline, Permanent Care & Adoptive Families (PCA Families) and VACCA.

Intake and access service hours are defined as hours spent by staff writing case notes, in face to face contact, making referrals, emailing, telephone contact, and other activities directly related to intake and referral for the young person. Services hours can be spent with the young person, carers, community and professionals.

Organisations must report on the

- number of hours of service provided, monthly
- number of new cases receiving a service

#### ***Support service hours***

These service hours are defined as hours spent by the service provider's staff providing Better Futures or Home Stretch case work support to young people. Service hours include time spent writing case notes and other activities directly relating to the individual young person.

Reporting captures support provided to young people still in care and preparing to transition to independent living, those in that transition and those who have left care. It applies to young people who are receiving active support, limited support, or active hold from Better Futures funded organisations.

Organisations must report the total number of service delivery hours for both new and existing clients.

#### ***Expenditure - Flexible Funding***

Organisations must report on the:

- total amount of Better Futures and / or Home Stretch flexible funding expended
- number of Better Futures or Home Stretch Flexible Funding packages provided and expenditure
- total amount of the Home Stretch Flexible Funding Independent Accommodation Allowance expended
- number of Home Stretch Flexible Funding Independent Accommodation Allowance packages provided and expenditure.

'Expended' refers to funds spent and not funds approved.

'Packages' refers to an instance of Better Futures or Home Stretch Flexible Funding expenditure. For example, one package may be an instance of funding a telephone for a young person, or one package may be funding for a bed, a fridge, and a washing machine for a young person setting up in new accommodation.

Note: Approvals for Flexible Funding, beyond \$5,000 need to go to a DFFH panel for approval.

## How information is recorded

### **Hours of service**

The total number of service hours spent on clients is recorded on CRIS/SP, a monthly CRIS/SP report is then generated and entered into the Service Delivery Tracking (SDT) for the agency. SDT is an online tracking tool that service providers must use to report their monthly service delivery against activities in their service agreement. Service providers will submit monthly data through My Agency, the secure section of the Funded Agency Channel.

There are SDT forms for reporting the numbers of hours spent in case work as service hours in the *Individual, Child and Family Support Reporting Template – Better Futures (31290)*. This records:

- Number of Service hours – Better Futures
- Number of Service hours - Home Stretch

The service delivery tracking acquittal templates are available to be completed and submitted from the first day of the month, for activity occurring in the previous month.

If adjustments need to be made in CRIS/SP for any reason, for example under-reporting, then they need to be made in SDT as well. This will trigger a specific request from APSS for the data to be unsubmitted, so that the agency can resubmit correct data.

### **Expenditure - Flexible Funding**

Reporting on expenditure for flexible funding also needs to be submitted, using the *Template – Better Futures (31292)*. This records expenditure data broken down into:

- Expenditure – Better Futures
- Expenditure - Home Stretch
- Expenditure - Home Stretch accommodation

The total flexible funding expenditure (exclusive of GST) is recorded on CRIS/SP, generated into the monthly CRIS/SP report, and entered into SDT.

The number of young people receiving flexible funding packages is recorded by an organisation on CRIS/SP. A bi-annual report is then generated by organisations and sent to the local Agency Performance System Support (APSS) advisor.

## Using the data

Funded Better Futures providers can extract the following reports from CRISSP:

- Better Futures Monthly Report CP504R
- Client Expenditure Report CP506R



Counting the total number of hours provided per young person each month (via a Better Futures or Home Stretch response) can be used to check that the right level of support (and hours) is being given. Those approved for active support should be getting a sustained intervention; those on limited support should be getting foundation level support and hours; those on active hold should be getting brief intervention.

Better Futures Performance and Reporting Practice advice (updated December 2021) outlines DFFH's performance monitoring tools and steps out the activities required of Better Futures service providers.

### Further guidance

#### Activity descriptions

To access funded activity descriptions, refer to the department's activity search website:  
<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/families-fairness-housing-health-activity-search>

#### Performance and reporting

Better Futures performance and reporting  
Practice advice updated December 2021

<https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-performance-and-reporting-practice-advice>

## 5.7 Better Futures Tools and Forms

The Guide outlines the tools and forms used within Better Futures. It is acknowledged that each ACCO based Better Futures program currently use a combination of tools that best meets their needs, pending advice from the department (expected mid 2022) about which tools are required when undertaking Better Futures Service delivery and practice.

This section breaks the tools and forms into 2 categories:

- Tools and forms used by OOHC care teams that Better Futures Workers need to know about
- The tools and Forms used by the Better Futures teams at VACCA<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the Advantaged Thinking Framework My Voice Planning Resources<sup>17</sup> are listed in Appendix 6.

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<sup>16</sup> Some of these have been adapted from the Advantaged Thinking Framework resources

<sup>17</sup> These are described in the Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework

## Tools and forms used by OOHC care teams that Better Futures Workers need to know about

Tool or form	Commentary
<b>1. Tools and forms used by OOHC care teams that Better Futures Workers need to know about</b>	
15+ Care and Transition Plan	The 15+ Care and Transition Plan is a vital document that child protection, foster care, kinship care and ACAC case manager and foster case managers, residential care and TCP key workers have a responsibility to complete once a young person turns 15. The completed 15+ Care and Transition plan is provided as part of the referral to Better Futures. It will also inform Better Futures engagement. The 15 + should continue to be developed by the Care team and have the young person’s ‘active voice’. It is important that young people have a copy of their plan as they transition from care.
Cultural Support Plans	The plan forms part of a young person’s case plan. The Cultural Support Plan (CSPs) incorporates information about the child’s Aboriginal family, community and culture. This information is used to set out culturally appropriate strategies to support the child to remain connected to their family, extended family, community and culture. From 15 years and 9 months, Better Futures worker should take a lead role in care team and CSP development.
Other forms that should have been completed while the young person is still in care and provided to you upon referral into Better Futures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Client overview document</li> <li>● Areas of concern document</li> <li>● Actions table from the case plan</li> <li>● Placement referral document</li> <li>● Care and placement plan</li> <li>● Assessment and Progress Record</li> <li>● Essential Information Record</li> <li>● Health assessments</li> <li>● Education assessments</li> <li>● Individual Education Plan</li> <li>● NDIS plan</li> <li>● Meeting minutes, or contracted case management quarterly reports</li> </ul> <p>Note: As described in the section on referrals above, if these forms are not completed while the young person is still in care there is often a great deal of work that Better Futures workers need to do to simply fill in the gaps of the client’s file (for example, gathering Essential Information and completing Cultural Support Plans). The Better Futures worker often provides the last chance for a young person to have their essential information gathered. In many cases, particularly where a young person’s Out of Home Care</p>

Tool or form	Commentary
	<p>placement has been case managed outside of an ACCO, CSPs are a high priority because young people present as significantly culturally isolated, with little connection to or knowledge of their Aboriginal family and community.</p>
<p><b>Referral Form</b></p>	<p>The referral form captures all the young person’s personal and cultural details, family members, legal orders, professionals they’ve had involvement with, some details about their current circumstances and key issues or concerns that the referrer identifies including information regarding security alerts or safety risks. The referral form also provides an initial assessment of the young person’s current connection to their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander identity and Culture and their strengths and goals. It includes a checklist of documents that should be attached to the referral including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• client Profile</li> <li>• case Plan</li> <li>• recent care team minutes</li> <li>• Essential Information Record</li> <li>• assessment and Progress Record</li> <li>• care and Transition plan</li> <li>• Cultural Support Plan</li> </ul> <p>Link to Better Futures Referral Checklist:  <a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-referral-checklist-providers">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-referral-checklist-providers</a></p>
<p><b>Consent Form</b></p>	<p>This is a form that the young person signs (and if relevant their parent or carer countersigns) to confirm they understand that participating in the Better Futures service is voluntary and that they understand and agree to being connected with an ACCO Better Futures Case Worker.</p>
<p><b>2. Tools and forms used by Better Futures Workers</b></p>	
<p><b>Readiness Tool</b></p>	<p>This tool is used to complete:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Background Details – to be completed by the Better Futures worker</li> <li>2. A Leaving Care Preparation Checklist</li> <li>3. An Assessment against each of the Advantaged Thinking Service Offer headings - Health and Wellbeing, Connections, Education, Employment and Housing and Living Skills.</li> </ol> <p>Information provided here is based on responses provided to the questions under the relevant Service Offer heading, and any</p>

Tool or form	Commentary
	<p>additional input from young person. The information captured here informs the preparation of the Readiness Report.</p> <p>The tool records:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The young person’s strengths/skills/talents</li> <li>• Identified contacts and resources</li> <li>• Opportunities needed/areas requiring follow up</li> <li>• Recommended task/actions to be undertaken</li> </ul>
<p><b>Readiness Report</b></p>	<p>The Readiness Report is produced by the Better Futures worker and shared with the care team. The report includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of the young person’s strengths/skills/talents (include any identified goals)</li> <li>• Opportunities/areas requiring care team’s attention; and</li> <li>• Key recommendations and actions requiring follow up by the care team to prepare for the young person’s transition to independent living.</li> </ul> <p>This form also records a young person’s details including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Information - whether they are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both, and the young person’s tribe/mob and language group</li> <li>• Admin details such as their CRIS Number, the Referrer/Case Manager’s contact details, their allocated Better Futures worker and their contact details.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support Plan</b></p>	<p>The support plan is completed with the young person. It includes goals under the different service offers and information under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions that need to be done to achieve this goal</li> <li>• Things I will do to achieve this goal</li> <li>• Supports needed from my Better Futures worker to achieve this goal</li> <li>• Planned completion date</li> <li>• Is Brokerage required to achieve goal?</li> <li>• Agreed Review Date</li> </ul> <p>Note: Many Aboriginal young people do not want to engage in completing forms, so this is often completed by the Better Futures worker following a consultation with their team leader.</p>
<p><b>Progress &amp; Review Tool</b></p>	<p>This is a central planning and case management tool for Better Futures. It provides an overview of the young person’s strengths and challenges and includes a check list to assess whether or not all</p>

Tool or form	Commentary
	<p>the documentation a young person needs for independent living has been obtained.</p> <p>The form reviews progress towards achievement of a young person's goals as identified in the support plan . It tracks current progress towards goal achievement (i.e., completed, underway or not yet started).</p>
<p><b>Home Stretch Application Form</b></p>	<p><a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form</a></p> <p>Note: Homestretch Proposals and Applications can only be completed by Contracted Case Managers and Child Protection, not Better Futures workers.</p> <p>From 2021-22, Home Stretch is available to eligible young people leaving care from 16 years of age.</p> <p>An application for Home Stretch should be submitted no later than six months prior to the young person leaving care, although it is acknowledged that this may vary depending on the individual circumstances of the young person (and carer where relevant).</p> <p>Home Stretch service response commences after a young person's child protection order ceases for the final time (or in some circumstances after the cessation of other post order funding arrangements)<sup>18</sup> and ends when the young person turns 21 years of age.</p>
<p><b>Home Stretch Proposal</b></p>	<p><a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-independent-accommodation-proposal">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-independent-accommodation-proposal</a></p> <p>Note Homestretch Proposals and Applications can only be completed by Contracted Case Managers and Child Protection, not Better Futures workers.</p>
<p><b>Better Futures Flexible Funding Request Form</b></p>	<p><a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-flexible-funding-request-form">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures-flexible-funding-request-form</a></p>

<sup>18</sup> Some young people receive extended funded supports for a limited period via *Targeted Care Packages* post order. In this instance, if an application to access Home Stretch was approved, Home Stretch funding and service response commences at the end of the TCP funding arrangement.

### **Further guidance**

The *Better Futures Advantaged Thinking Practice Framework* by Joe Howie with Emma Cull, Sally James and Shelley Mallett can be found at:

[https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL\\_BetterFuturesFramework\\_Mar19\\_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829](https://assets.bsl.org.au/assets/services/Young-people/BSL_BetterFuturesFramework_Mar19_2020.pdf?mtime=20200406153829)

and available at: <https://library.bsl.org.au/bsljspui/handle/1/11931>

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Community Connections Services and the areas they cover

#### **Ballarat and Central Highlands area**

Child and Family Services Ballarat (Better Futures and Community Connection) Phone: (03) 5337 3333

Better Futures across the Central Highlands local area.

Local Government Areas (LGAs): Ararat, Ballarat, Hepburn, Moorabool, Golden Plains, Pyrenees.

#### **Bendigo and Loddon area**

Anglicare Victoria – St Luke's Region (Better Futures and Community Connections) Phone: (03) 5434 3922

Better Futures across the Loddon local area.

LGAs: Campaspe, Greater Bendigo, Central Goldfields, Loddon, Mount Alexander, Macedon Ranges

#### **Geelong and Barwon area**

Barwon Child, Youth and Family (Better Futures and Community Connection) Phone: (03) 5226 8900

Better Futures across the Barwon local area

LGAs: Colac-Otway / Corangamite, Geelong, Queenscliff, Surf Coast

#### **Melbourne Eastern**

White Lion Inc (Community Connection) Phone: 1300 669 600

Better Futures across the Eastern Melbourne, Inner and Outer East local areas.

LGAs: Boroondara, Monash, Manningham, Knox, Maroondah, Whitehorse, Yarra Ranges

#### **Melbourne Northern**

White Lion Inc (Community Connection) Phone: 1300 669 600

Better Futures across the North East Melbourne area and Hume Moreland area.

LGAs: Banyule, Darebin, Hume, Moreland, Nillumbik, Whittlesea, Yarra



## **Melbourne Southern**

Jesuit Social Services (Community Connections provider) Phone: (03) 9791 6596

MOIRA Inc (Better Futures and Community Connections) Phone (03) 8552 2222 or email betterfuturesintake@moira.org.au

Better Futures across the Southern Melbourne, Bayside Peninsula local areas

Local Government area: Bayside, Frankston, Glen Eira, Kingston, Mornington Peninsula, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Casey, Cardinia, Greater Dandenong

## **Melbourne Western**

White Lion Inc (Community Connections) Phone: 1300 669 600

Better Futures across the Western Melbourne, Brimbank Melton local areas.

LGAs: Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong, Melbourne, Melton, Moonee Valley, Wyndham

## **Mildura and Mallee area**

Mallee Accommodation and Support Program (Community Connections) Phone: (03) 5021 6500

Better Futures across the Mallee local area.

LGAs: Buloke, Gannawarra, Mildura, Swan Hill

## **Morwell and Inner and Outer Gippsland areas**

Berry Street Inc (Gippsland) for Whitelion Inc (Community Connections) Phone: (03) 5134 5971

Better Futures across the Inner and Outer Gippsland local areas.

LGAs: Baw, Bass Coast, Latrobe, South Gippsland, East Gippsland, Wellington

## **Mooroopna / Shepparton and Goulburn area**

Berry Street Inc (Goulburn) (Community Connections) Phone: (03) 5822 8100

Better Futures across the Goulburn area.

LGAs: Greater Shepparton, Moira, Strathbogie, Mitchell, Murrindindi

## **Wangaratta and Ovens Murray area**

Junction Support Services Inc (Better Futures and Community Connections) Phone: (02) 6043 7400

North East Support and Action for Youth (NESAY) (Better futures and Community Connections) Phone: (03) 5720 2201

Better Futures across the Ovens Murray local area.

LGAs: Alpine, Benalla, Mansfield, Wangaratta, Indigo, Towong, Wodonga

## **Warrnambool/Horsham and Wimmera South West area**

Brophy Youth and Family Services (Better Futures and Community Connections) Phone: (03) 5561 8888

Uniting Wimmera (Better Futures and Community Connection) Phone: (03) 5362 4093

Better Futures across Wimmera South West local area

LGAs: Hindmarsh, Horsham, Northern Grampians, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack, Glenelg, Moyne, Southern Grampians and Warrnambool

## Appendix 2: Communication

Aboriginal people have specific ways of communicating which are not universal. Some communication practices relate to traditional lore, gender or location. Also, communication needs to be approached sensitively as the quality and opportunity for engagement and effective communication is also influenced by intergenerational trauma experienced by many Aboriginal young people and their families. It is important to consider the associated trauma caused by the service system and the associated feelings of fear, shame and ultimately disempowerment many Aboriginal people associate with most services. Below are some points relevant to Aboriginal ways of communicating, adapted from the Kinship Care guidelines.

- Use yarning, an informal narrative approach, to collect information rather than lists of direct questions. Direct questions can be intimidating and feel interrogating and limit your ability to draw out information. Open questions are considered more polite, especially to start with. Let the young person tell the story in their words.
- Use open questions and listen to the story respectfully and hear their story, their journey and what is important to the young person as an emerging adult, without interrupting. While this may take time in the beginning, the outcome will be better working relationship and subsequent richer understanding and assessment of the young person's needs for example – *Can you tell me a little bit more about.....?*
- Be aware of sensitive topics. The young person may be a child or grandchild of the Stolen Generations or may have been a victim of abuse themselves. They are unlikely to discuss this with you until trust has been established and this may take some time.
- Careful planning and support should occur for when questions will be raised about family history and relationships.
- Limit use of notepads and IT devices during the initial relationship building and assessment stages to enable a more meaningful and open working relationship to begin
- Use genograms and family circles with the young person to talk about family and friend relationships, significant family members, family values and characteristics, major events and celebrations.

## Appendix 3: Education Resources and Tools

It is recommended that Better Futures Workers support young people to engage with the following resources.

### Raising Expectations

Raising Expectations supports young people in out-of-home care and care leavers to aspire to, access and succeed in vocational and higher education.

Information specific to Aboriginal young person specific s provided, including individual TAFE and University Koorie support services.

Bringing together the community, education, vocational and higher educational sectors and related organisations and government, Raising Expectations is increasing the participation of young people with an out-of-home care experience to access and succeed in vocational and higher education.

### Department of Education and Training (DET) LOOKOUT Education Support Centres

LOOKOUT Education Support centres work with schools, carers, child protection practitioners and out-of-home care services to build their capacity to improve the educational outcomes for children and young people living in out-of-home care. LOOKOUT Centres have Koorie Cultural Advisors who can provide cultural support and guidance.

South Western Victoria Region - [lookout.swv@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.swv@education.vic.gov.au)

South Eastern Victoria Region - [lookout.sev@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.sev@education.vic.gov.au)

North Western Victoria Region - [lookout.nwv@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.nwv@education.vic.gov.au)

North Eastern Victoria Region - [lookout.nev@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.nev@education.vic.gov.au)

### Department of Education and Training state-wide Koorie Education Workforce (link to VACCA LMS)

Visit our VACCA Education LMS page to find Koorie Education regional contacts.

The state-wide Koorie Education workforce provide advice and support from early years through to post-school education.

### Wurreker Brokers

Through the Wurreker Strategy and its partnership with the Victorian Government, the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) provides advice on the training needs of Koorie young people across all industry groups.

Click here to find contact details for the Wurreker Broker in your area.

### Local Learning and Employment Networks

There are 31 organisations comprising the Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) in Victoria. The goal of each LLEN is to support all secondary school students within its geographical boundaries, by developing partnerships which result in an increase in the number and range of school-employer engagement activities in local government areas.

Visit the above link to find out where your nearest LLEN is located. LLENs welcome new members??

### Learn Local Providers

Learn Local providers can help young people get the skills they need for study, work and life. Visit the above website link to search by suburb for providers accessible within the local community.

A Learn Local provider can assist young people to:

- land their first job
- finish school
- get into further training or university
- develop social skills and increase confidence.

### **Tools**

It is recommended that Case Workers support young people to engage with the following resources.

### Create Your Future Guide

This practical tool can support education planning – refer to page 18-22

### Department of Education and Training (DET) Career Action Plans

A career action plan is a dynamic planning document owned and managed by young people intended to reflect their increased career development learning.

The plan helps young people:

- set their goals
- clarify the actions needed to achieve these goals
- commit to participating in the planned activities.

### Additional DET online tools

DET have the following online tools available to support young people to explore education and training pathways. As part of the process, they develop a Career Action Plan.

All Year 9 students in government schools now have access to My Career Insights, a comprehensive online career discovery and assessment tool. Once they have completed their career assessment, students are able to access high quality one-on-one career counselling with an external accredited career practitioner.

All students in government schools can access My Career Portfolio, an online resource to help students explore career options, plan their futures through Career Action Plans and store files related to their course and career planning.

## Appendix 4: Group Work for Young People in Better Futures

Groups and classes operated by ACCOs are often strong in culture and in facilitating community engagement opportunities. However, community dynamics can be challenging to understand in the beginning. To assist managing this, it is important not to assume that, because the group is being operated by an ACCO, the young person's experience will automatically be culturally safe. An Aboriginal young person's trust of another Aboriginal person is not instant, and steps will need to be taken to for cultural and community connections to be built.

It is good practice to obtain as much detail as you can about the group, before speaking to the young person about whether they are interested in it. To assist the young person to make an informed decision about participating, consider identifying the following:

- What is the group about, who operates the group and what do you know about this group (how did you find out and what did you find out)?
- Is it gender specific? What is the ratio of male/female workers/facilitators?
- Criteria for attending – what is the relevance/appeal for the young person to participate? What's in it for them?
- Who will be in attendance and how many people are in the group?
- Group frequency and duration – how often and how long does the group operate?
- Group operation times – what time/s does the group operate? Is the young person required to be there at a specific time, or expected to arrive 10 minutes early?
- Group location – is it accessible, can the young person get there, do they have the resources to attend (fare, petrol)?
- Is it a culturally safe space?
- Cost for participation – how much does it cost, what is the method for payment and what are the payment terms? Who will pay and for how long?
- Expectation for participation – is attendance compulsory on joining, can they attend as needed, is there a minimum requirement? Does the young person have to introduce themselves or are they introduced? Consider any possible shame factor for the young person.
- If it is a culturally specific group, is a confirmation of Aboriginality required? Will they be asked who their mob is and where they're from?
- Safety and risk management methods – how does the group protect its participants? Can the young person leave at any time if they feel uncomfortable?
- What support is offered group participants?
- Will they receive a certificate at the end?

## Types of groups that may be available in the community for Better Futures clients.

Group Description	In-Care Phase	Post-Care Phase	All Phases
Cultural Group	Return to Country Excursions/ Camps; Cultural protocols; Cultural Stories	Planning cultural activities and Community engagement; Land Management. Cultural Mentoring; Cultural strengthening	Community activities; Men and Women's Groups; NAIDOC; Holistic healing; Smoking and cultural ceremonies; Cultural goal setting
Peer Group/Youth Group	Camps; Positive support groups; Peer relationships. Personal Development; Peer to peer learning	Leaving Care mentoring support groups	Community activities; Men and Women's Groups; Holistic healing; Understanding rights; Bullying/Experiences of discrimination/racism
Living Skills Group	independent living skills; Cooking on a budget; Food prep/cooking classes; practical housework skills; laundry; Navigating Centrelink; Medicare; ATO; e-health records; Budgeting and financial support; Financial affairs – loans, credit, interest and repayments	Navigating Justice systems (criminal, fines etc.). Family Tracing/Family Finding; Obtaining Confirmation of Aboriginality; Property Management – repairs and upkeep, tenant rights, complaints etc.	Community activities; Men and Women's Groups; Holistic healing; Housing and accommodation skills – applying for properties in private and public markets, Victorian Housing Register, paying rent, subsidies; Developing good decision making; Goal setting; Obtaining Identification; Understanding and protecting your rights
Educational Group	Learner's Driving Courses; Job Fair – career pathway builder; Tutoring	Indigenous programs; Community support	Job readiness – Cards and permits; Tertiary pathway Information sessions – courses and scholarships Goal Setting

Group Description	In-Care Phase	Post-Care Phase	All Phases
Employment Group	Resume building – where to start; Applying for Jobs-addressing selection criteria & Interviewing techniques	Indigenous programs; Employment skills and goal setting; WWCC/National Police Checks; Entry Level/Traineeship; Recruitment Sessions	Job readiness. BF Job Fairs
Recreational Group	Positive support groups		Community activities; Men and Women's Groups
Health Promotion/Fitness Group	Prevention; Community Runs/Walks; Community Gardens	Aboriginal Health Clinics (Youth check-ups); Therapy and Counselling; Allied Health Programs (diabetes, disability, maternity etc.); Social and Emotional Wellness Groups; Gym/Exercise Groups	Community activities; Men and Women's Groups; Holistic healing; Understanding of the impact of transgenerational trauma & dispossession
Family Group (Sibling, Parent/child)		Parent groups/Playgroups; Goal Setting	Community activities; Men and Women's Groups

## Appendix 5: Other Resources

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
DFFH BF Webpage	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Better Futures</li> <li>2. Home Stretch support for young people leaving care</li> <li>3. Community connections</li> <li>4. Eligibility</li> <li>5. Referral</li> <li>6. Available supports</li> </ol>	<p><a href="https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures">https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures</a></p> <p><b>Practice advice</b> To facilitate the implementation and operations of Better Futures practice advice have been developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures eligibility and referral</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures allocation and prioritisation</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures levels of support</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures flexible funding</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures roles and responsibilities</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures Performance and Reporting</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Community Connections Practice Advice</a></li> </ul> <p>For more information, see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures (Post Care Service) factsheet (word)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures - activities and sub activities (word)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Providers guide for Better Future funding reform (word)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Better Futures Flexible Funding Request form (word)</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Home Stretch and Better Futures support – Information for young people on permanent care orders (word)</a></li> </ul>
Support services for young people leaving care	There are many support services available to help young people as they transition from care to independent living	<p><a href="#">YSAS</a> - provides treatment services and enables re-engagement with education and training, families and communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Youth, Drugs and Alcohol Advice</a> - (YODAA) provides young people with alcohol and drug information, support options, a service finder and options for self-help. It also provides information, tools and advice for carers and professionals; or</li> </ul>



Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DirectLine is a 24-hour, seven days a week telephone and online service that supports people seeking alcohol and other drug information, advice or referral to treatment. Call 1800 888 236 or visit <a href="http://www.directline.org.au/service-finder">www.directline.org.au/service-finder</a>.</li> </ul>
VACCA website	A variety of useful resources	<a href="http://www.vacca.org">www.vacca.org</a> Leaving Care: <a href="https://www.vacca.org/page/services/children-and-families/children-in-care/better-futures-post-care">https://www.vacca.org/page/services/children-and-families/children-in-care/better-futures-post-care</a> Dadirri - deep listening, initiation, sharing stories & cultural information <a href="https://www.vacca.org/page/get-involved/cultural-hub/video/dadirri---deep-listening-initiation-sharing-stories-and-cultural-information">https://www.vacca.org/page/get-involved/cultural-hub/video/dadirri---deep-listening-initiation-sharing-stories-and-cultural-information</a> Keeping Our Kids Safe - A guide for cultural safety <a href="https://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-and-research/child-safety-and-wellbeing/keeping-our-kids-safe/">https://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-and-research/child-safety-and-wellbeing/keeping-our-kids-safe/</a> Cultural Strengthening Programs <a href="https://www.vacca.org/page/services/cultural-strengthening-programs">https://www.vacca.org/page/services/cultural-strengthening-programs</a> Cultural Hub <a href="https://www.vacca.org/cultural-hub?term=&amp;interest=all&amp;audience=young+mob&amp;type=all">https://www.vacca.org/cultural-hub?term=&amp;interest=all&amp;audience=young+mob&amp;type=all</a>
Aboriginal Cultural resources	A variety of Aboriginal Cultural resource links to explore	Genuine Partnerships online audit tool: <a href="https://www.snaicc.org.au/sector-development/audit-tool/">https://www.snaicc.org.au/sector-development/audit-tool/</a> Applying for Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Services – A guide to best- practice partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations: <a href="https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/1149_SNAICC_FundingBook_LR-Final.pdf">https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/1149_SNAICC_FundingBook_LR-Final.pdf</a>

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<p>Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations  <a href="https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SNAICC-VACCA-OCS-ChildSafeReport-LR-with-alt-tags-May2021.pdf">https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/SNAICC-VACCA-OCS-ChildSafeReport-LR-with-alt-tags-May2021.pdf</a></p> <p>Building Respectful Partnerships – The Commitment to Aboriginal Cultural Competence in Child and Family Services  <a href="https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/VAC.0001.003.0074.pdf">https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/VAC.0001.003.0074.pdf</a></p> <p>Working with Aboriginal people and communities – a practice resource:  <a href="http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/321308/working_with_aboriginal.pdf">http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/321308/working_with_aboriginal.pdf</a></p> <p>Child’s Voice: Our Children have the Right to be Heard:  <a href="https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/Childs_Voice_Booklet.pdf">https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/Childs_Voice_Booklet.pdf</a></p> <p>The Yarn Up Cards:  <a href="https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/families/families-are-first/yarn-up-cards">https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/families/families-are-first/yarn-up-cards</a></p> <p>Speak Up resources:  <a href="https://childsafety.pmc.gov.au/resources/speak-up-make-complaint">https://childsafety.pmc.gov.au/resources/speak-up-make-complaint</a></p> <p>Working with Indigenous children, families and communities  <a href="https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/working-indigenous-children-families-and-communities-lessons-practi">https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/working-indigenous-children-families-and-communities-lessons-practi</a></p> <p>Journey of Wellbeing: A Preliminary Aboriginal Model of Care:  <a href="https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/report/journey-wellbeing-preliminary-aboriginal-model-care">https://www.nswmentalhealthcommission.com.au/report/journey-wellbeing-preliminary-aboriginal-model-care</a></p>

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<p>Engaging with Aboriginal communities: Where do we start?  <a href="https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/acecqa/files/NEL/engaging-with-aboriginal-communities1.pdf">https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/acecqa/files/NEL/engaging-with-aboriginal-communities1.pdf</a></p> <p>First Peoples Disability Network Australia:  <a href="http://fpdn.org.au">http://fpdn.org.au</a></p> <p><i>Know your rights: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders</i> Australian Human Rights Commission guide to racial discrimination and your rights:  <a href="https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/know-your-rights">https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/know-your-rights</a></p> <p>This Aboriginal culturally informed resource tool has been designed to be used by service providers in conjunction with the evidence guide and culturally informed addendum <a href="#">Human Services Standards Aboriginal culturally informed resource tool (word)</a></p> <p>Cultural safety for Aboriginal children:  <a href="https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tip-sheet-cultural-safety-aboriginal-children.pdf">https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/assets/resources/tip-sheet-cultural-safety-aboriginal-children.pdf</a></p> <p>NATSIHWA Cultural safety framework:  <a href="https://www.naatsihwp.org.au/sites/default/files/natsihwa-cultural_safety-framework_summary.pdf">https://www.naatsihwp.org.au/sites/default/files/natsihwa-cultural_safety-framework_summary.pdf</a></p> <p>Aboriginal cultural security framework:  <a href="https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/689695/Aboriginal-Cultural-Security-Framework.pdf">https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/689695/Aboriginal-Cultural-Security-Framework.pdf</a></p> <p>Building Cultural Capability – What works?  <a href="http://www.intercultural.com.au/building-cultural-capability-what-works/">http://www.intercultural.com.au/building-cultural-capability-what-works/</a></p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural capability framework:  <a href="https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/diversity-and-inclusion/aboriginal-and-">https://www.apsc.gov.au/working-aps/diversity-and-inclusion/aboriginal-and-</a></p>

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<a href="https://www.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/175421/cultural-capability-training-strategy.pdf">torres-strait-islander-workforce/cultural-capability-framework</a>  Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships: Cultural Capability Matters <a href="https://www.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/175421/cultural-capability-training-strategy.pdf">https://www.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/175421/cultural-capability-training-strategy.pdf</a>
Victorian resources for young people leaving care	Various links and resource	<a href="#">Create Foundation website</a>  <a href="#">Create Your Future website</a>  <a href="#">Young Care Leavers page on the Department of Human Services website</a>  <b>Leaving Care Help Line (phone 1300 532 846)</b>  <a href="#">Leaving care page on the Department of Human Services website</a>  <a href="#">Young Care Leavers page on the Department of Human Services website</a> or contact the Leaving Care Help Line 1300 532 846
Financial assistance	A variety of financial resource links to explore	<a href="#">Transition to Independent Living Allowance website</a>  TILA Application form: <a href="https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/benefits-payments/transition-to-independent-living-allowance-tila/tila-application-form">https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children/benefits-payments/transition-to-independent-living-allowance-tila/tila-application-form</a>  TILA Guide for caseworkers: <a href="https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2021/tila_-_guide_for_caseworkers.pdf">https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/11_2021/tila_-_guide_for_caseworkers.pdf</a>
Disability resources	A variety of disability resource links to explore	First Peoples Disability Network Australia: <a href="http://fpdn.org.au">http://fpdn.org.au</a>  Children and Young People with Disability Australia: <a href="https://cyda.org.au">https://cyda.org.au</a>

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<p><a href="#">Action on Disability Advocacy Service</a> – is an organisation that aims to empower people with disabilities from ethnic backgrounds, their families and carers</p> <p><a href="#">Association for Children with a Disability</a> – advocacy and information service for families of children with disability</p> <p><a href="#">Disability Discrimination Legal Service</a> – a state-wide independent community legal centre that provides free legal services in several areas.</p> <p><a href="#">Disability support</a></p> <p><a href="#">Disability Support Pension</a> – for 16 years and over</p> <p><a href="#">National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Raising Children Network</a> – includes links to a forum for parents of children with a disability and information about supporting siblings, or other children in the family</p> <p><a href="#">Youth Disability Advocacy Service</a> – is a Victoria-wide disability advocacy service for young people aged 12 to 25</p> <p><a href="#">Victorian Disability Services Commissioner</a> – provides free, confidential and supportive complaints resolution for people with a disability</p>
LGBTQ+ supports	A variety of LGBTQ+ resource links to explore	<p><a href="#">CREATE</a> – tools and resources for LGBTQ young people in care</p> <p><a href="#">Rainbow Network</a> - Rainbow Families Council – links to LGBTI support services, check website</p> <p><a href="#">Queerspace</a>, or call 03 9663 6733 Counselling and Case Management</p> <p><a href="#">Resources for LGBTIQ+ carers</a> - for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex carers.</p>

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<p><a href="#">Safe Schools</a> – this national partnership of organisations and schools works together to make schools a safe environment for SSAGDI young people</p> <p><a href="#">Minus 18</a> – Minus 18 is a youth-led organisation for SSAGDI youth</p> <p><a href="#">TRANSCEND</a> – provides advocacy, support and fundraising for young transgender Australians</p> <p>Guide to LGBTI inclusive practice:  <a href="https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/research-resources">https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/research-resources</a></p> <p>Rainbow Tick Accreditation process:  <a href="https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/rainbow-tick">https://rainbowhealthaustralia.org.au/rainbow-tick</a></p> <p>LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (formerly the National LGBTI Health Alliance):  <a href="https://www.lgbtiqhealth.org.au">https://www.lgbtiqhealth.org.au</a></p> <p><a href="#">VACCA’s Rainbow Tick resources</a></p>
Crisis and family violence services		<p><a href="#">Bully Stoppers</a></p> <p><a href="#">ReachOut</a> has resources and a discussion forum in relation to bullying</p> <p><a href="#">National Centre Against Bullying</a></p> <p><a href="#">Kids Helpline</a> or  Call 1800 55 1800  <a href="#">Beyondblue</a>, or call 1300 22 4636</p> <p><a href="#">Lifeline</a>, or call 13 11 14</p> <p><a href="#">SuicideLine Victoria</a>, or call 1300 651 251</p> <p><a href="#">Djirra</a>, or call 1800 105 303 (free call)  Djirra works with Aboriginal people who are experiencing or have experienced family</p>

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<p>violence. Djirra also assist non-Aboriginal people experiencing family violence who are parents of Aboriginal children.</p> <p><a href="#">Elizabeth Morgan House</a></p> <p>EMH offers culturally safe service, holistic family violence support to Aboriginal women &amp; their children. Their support also extends to parents of Aboriginal children, as well as partners and ex-partners of Aboriginal people.</p> <p><a href="#">Safe Steps</a> or call 1800 015 188 Safe Steps is Victoria's 24/7 family violence response centre</p> <p><a href="#">13 Yarn</a> or call 13 92 76 13YARN [Thirteen YARN] is the first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. They offer a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.</p>
Employment resources	A variety of employment resource links to explore	<p><a href="#">Back to Work Scheme</a></p> <p><a href="#">Disability Employment Service providers</a></p> <p><a href="#">JobAccess</a> – the website provides information about supporting workers with a disability for people with disability, their co-workers, employers, and Disability Employment Services providers; or Phone a JobAccess adviser on 1800 464 800.</p> <p><a href="#">jobactive</a></p> <p><a href="#">CareerTrackers</a> CareerTrackers is a national purpose-driven organisation that supports pre-professional Indigenous university students and links them with employers to participate in paid, multi-year internships. CareerTrackers students complete university with high</p>

Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<p>marks, industry experience and bright futures.</p> <p><a href="#">myfuture</a> – provides information about career planning, education and training options, VTAC courses, pathways to prepare for university studies, support and mentoring</p> <p><a href="#">Transition to Work</a> Aboriginal officers at Centrelink</p>
Health resources	A variety of health resource links to explore	<p><a href="#">Ambulance transport for Health Care Card holders</a></p> <p>Maternal Child and Health Line, call 13 22 29, 24 hours, seven days a week.</p> <p><a href="#">Medicare</a> – for more information on Medicare cards for children and young people in out-of-home care</p> <p><a href="#">Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme</a></p> <p><a href="#">Family Planning Victoria</a> provides a range of information about sexual and reproductive health</p> <p><a href="#">Chief Psychiatrist's</a> - guidelines to mental health services on implementing priority service access for infants, children and young people who are placed in out-of-home care</p> <p><a href="#">headspace</a> is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12–25 year old's, along with assistance in promoting young peoples' wellbeing</p>
Trauma Resources	A variety of trauma resource links to explore	<p><a href="#">Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for Indigenous Australian children</a></p>



Resource Name	Brief Description	e-Link to Resource
		<p><a href="#">Mentoring programs for Indigenous youth at risk</a></p> <p><a href="#">Review of early childhood parenting, education and health intervention programs for Indigenous children and families in Australia</a></p> <p><a href="#">The effect of trauma on the brain development of children</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/framework-trauma-informed-practice">https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/publications/framework-trauma-informed-practice</a></p> <p><a href="#">Trauma-informed services and trauma-specific care for Indigenous Australian children</a></p> <p><a href="#">Trauma-informed care in child/family welfare services</a></p> <p>Australian Childhood Foundation: <a href="#">9 Plain English Principles of Trauma Informed Care</a></p> <p>The <a href="#">Berry Street Childhood Institute</a> also provides a number of resources and training on trauma-informed care for children.</p> <p><a href="#">Health Care Toolbox Culturally-Sensitive Trauma-Informed Care</a></p>

## Appendix 6: The Advantaged Thinking Framework My Voice Planning Tools

The Advantaged Thinking Framework My Voice Planning Tools	
My Address Book	The Address Book assists young people in developing a personal contact list of networks across life domains and services that will remain available to them beyond the Better Futures active service timeframe. It may also include online supports like mindfulness apps, podcasts, inspirational speakers and videos.
Something for Something Proposal	Young people outline what they can offer e.g., talents skills and what they would like in return e.g., course costs
Reflection	<p>Provides an opportunity for a young person to reflect on an opportunity or activity they've done: – what they did and didn't like and what they want to do more of or next</p> <p>This process promotes the recognition of achievements and affirmation of skills as well as providing an opportunity to reflect on the direction of goals and pathways based on actual experiences. This planning resource is best used after engaging with an opportunity or experience and should foster a constructive dialogue about the next steps.</p>
Where Am I Now	This resource not only provides an easy visual tracking of, and reflection on, a young person's overall progress to independence, but celebrates their achievements as well.
My Vision	This resource promotes a conversation with young people about future aspirations and blue-sky thinking and develops a holistic vision for their future. It gives them an opportunity to identify broad planning goals across the 5 Offers and enables a conversation that lays the foundation for further goal setting and planning.
The Deal	<p>The Deal is an agreement between the young person, the Better Futures worker (called Development Coaches in the Advantaged Thinking Framework) and other key support people in your life.</p> <p>Young people are advised that "This 'deal' sets out what you can expect of us and what we expect of you."</p> <p>Aboriginal workers participating in the consultations for this project shared that they find some aspects of the Advantaged Thinking Approach and its associated language not culturally appropriate. For example, the premise of 'The Deal' is that it enables a conversation where the client is empowered to be in control and participate in decisions about their life and take on responsibilities towards achieving their goals. In practice, however, the notion of 'The Deal'</p>

	<p>can be construed as transactional and confronting for many vulnerable young people.</p>
Readiness Mind Map	<p>The Initial Readiness Mind Map offers a more informal or creative way to capture the information for the Initial Readiness form or report. It allows young people to engage in a conversation without the structure of the Initial Readiness form and gives them space to communicate more organically or creatively.</p>
Next Steps	<p>Next Steps assists in creating an action plan, which can be related to young people’s goals and interests or respond to immediate needs. The agreed plan steps out the roles and accountabilities of the Development Coach and the young people as well as mapping any broader networks of support.</p>
<b>Readiness Form</b>	<p>This form is similar to the VACCA Readiness Report. It is intended to be completed within the first month of a young person’s active engagement in the Post Care phase.</p> <p>Initial Readiness supports a way of working that allows young people to identify where they think they are at. It also assists Development Coaches to assess someone’s readiness to take up different levels of opportunities and activities, and together touch on a range of life areas and explore relevant motivations and challenges.</p> <p>Note: This form duplicates information in the 15+ transition plan, referral form and CSP.</p>
The Initial Fit tool	<p>The Initial Fit tool is to be used as soon as the Initial Readiness form has been completed</p> <p>The Initial Fit tool assesses the level of support offered to a participant upon entry into the Better Futures Service. It does this by measuring their motivations and challenges across a range of domains. This assessment is only preliminary and will be reviewed within one month of engaging with Better Futures post care service.</p>
Deciding on my goals	<p>This is a form for young people to think about their dreams and aspirations, and then have ago at ranking their goals in order of importance.</p> <p>This simple process helps young people to reflect on their aspirations, vision and progress, and to organise what is most and least important and/or urgent to them. It maintains an empowering tone that allows young people to set the agenda.</p>

### Connections Tool

This tool supports young people to identify the most important contacts and resources that may be able to help them in different life areas.

The Connections tool guides practice towards developing broader community connections while also supporting young people to capture contacts and resources along the way.

### Informal Learning Mind Map

The Informal learning Mind Map assists in the recognition of informal learning and affirms talents and skills. This process is intended to be conversational in nature between Development Coaches and young people. It can be used as a way of getting to know young people better, support their development, build their confidence or facilitate a process around developing a resumé.