

Successful transitions to independence

*“I want to be supported
until I become an adult both
emotionally and physically
and am ready to live
independently”⁹³*

93 Page 17 of the CREATE Report Card 2008: Transitioning from Care, Brisbane 2008.

Successful transitions to independence

Key messages

- Young people are seeking greater assistance from the Department of Child Safety in preparing them to transition from out-of-home care when they turn 18. When responding to the Child Guardian Survey 2008, approximately 40% of young people aged 16-17 years reported they had not been spoken to about what happens when they turn 18, and only 25% of eligible young people in foster care and 18% in residential care said they had a Leaving Care Plan.
- Young people who have spent time in out-of-home care are four times less likely than other Year 12 graduates to be undertaking further education or vocational opportunities.

Expected outcome for children and young people

The child safety system should prepare, as far as possible, each young person in out-of-home care for adulthood and independent living, including by planning appropriately.

Significance

The transition to adulthood is a major life event for young people in the child safety system. It will involve the withdrawal of a variety of supports and services, which makes planning and preparing for the transition critical if the young people are to achieve the best possible outcomes.

How the child safety system is working together

The Department of Child Safety has worked collaboratively with stakeholders of the child safety system, including the CREATE Foundation and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts, dedicating resources and developing initiatives to improve current transition from care practices and outcomes. These collaborative efforts are discussed later in this chapter.

Key findings in 2007–08

Young people feeling unprepared to transition to independence

The Child Guardian Survey 2008 found that:⁹⁴

- Approximately 40% of young people 16 years and over reported that no one had spoken to them about what will happen when they turn 18.

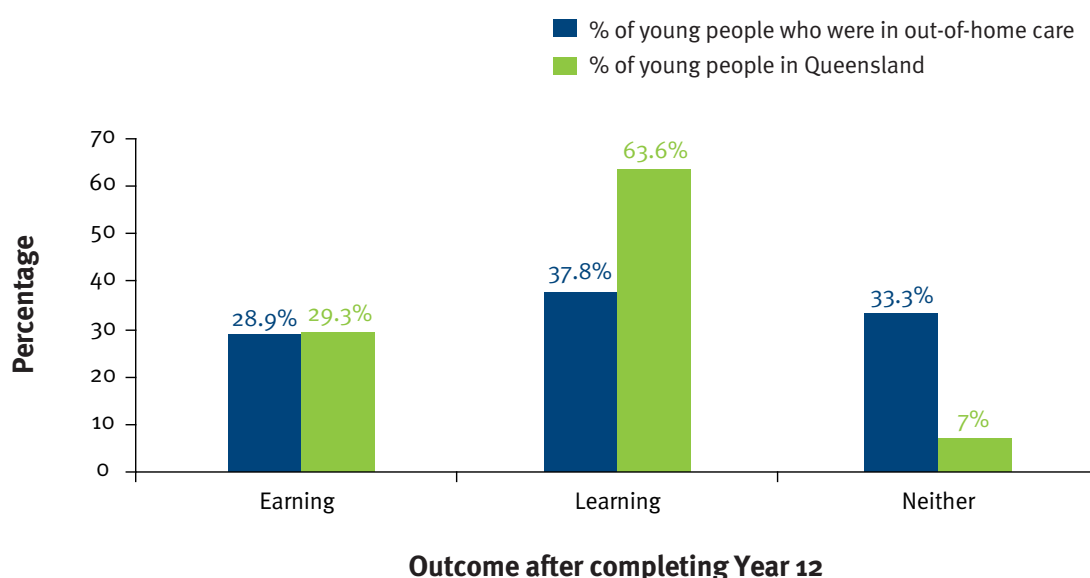
⁹⁴ A total of 1861 children and young people (from foster and residential care) responded to the Child Guardian's survey, administered in early 2008. The survey findings do not necessarily represent the views of all children and young people in out-of-home care.

- 25% of young people in foster care 16 years and over reported having a Leaving Care Plan, but of those, only 60% reported being involved in the development of their Leaving Care Plan.
- Only four (or 18%) young people in residential care 16 years and over reported having a Leaving Care Plan, all of whom reported being involved in the development of their Leaving Care Plan.

Almost all of the 49 young people subject of a 2007–08 Community Visitor Serious Issue Form⁹⁵ about transitioning from care stated they felt unprepared to live independently. Generally, the young people felt the transition process was rushed at the last minute, leaving them unprepared and anxious about what will happen when they turn 18.

Earning or further learning by young people formerly in out-of-home care

Figure 10: Proportion of Year 12 completers identified as being in out-of-home care compared to Queensland school completers generally, by outcome for 2007⁹⁶



As shown in Figure 10, a similar proportion of young people in out-of-home care were earning, compared to all young people.

Young people who spent time in out-of-home care were approximately half as likely to undertake further education and were four times more likely than all Year 12 graduates to be neither learning or earning six months after leaving school.

⁹⁵ Further explanation of Serious Issues is provided in Appendix C of this report.

⁹⁶ Page 30, Child Protection Queensland 2006-07 Performance Report, Department of Child Safety, Queensland, 2008.

Child Guardian activities to improve transitions

Community Visitor reporting

The Child Guardian is revising its reporting framework to better analyse and capture data and information about the service needs and planning for children and young people who will soon transition from out-of-home care.

Self-placement audit

The Child Guardian's audit of at-risk adolescents who self-place from out-of-home care indicated that only half of the young people who were aged 15 years or older, and reported requiring planning for their transition from care, were receiving it.

Child Guardian Stamp of Approval

CREATE *Transitioning From Care Report Card 2008*



The CREATE Foundation has produced a *Transitioning From Care Report Card 2008*, which evaluates service delivery to young people transitioning from out-of-home care. CREATE is committed to improving outcomes from transition processes, and continues to offer specialist programs to support young people as they leave care. The Department of Child Safety has committed \$1.5 million in funding to improve transition from care services for young people in the child safety system.

The Department of Child Safety has introduced a number of initiatives to improve current transition from care practices, including a planning tool, that was developed in collaboration with CREATE, to assist Child Safety Officers when providing support to young people who are transitioning.

New transition from care resources have also been developed including:

- A reference guide of State and Commonwealth youth, training and employment programs, and
- A practical booklet on leaving care, "Where to from here" available for young people, which provides relevant contact numbers for services.

The Department of Child Safety and the Department of Education, Training and the Arts have also funded a non-government organisation to provide intensive support to young people leaving care to assist them to develop life skills and engage in training and employment. This service is located in the Logan and Goodna region.⁹⁷

Strategic action areas for 2008–09

The Child Guardian will continue with its analysis of the 2008 survey results and the CREATE report card to identify ways for the child safety system to assess the effectiveness of its transition planning, including by better monitoring outcomes for young people who have transitioned from care.

⁹⁷ Correspondence received from the Department of Child Safety, dated 30 January 2009.