



Newsletter

Autumn
Edition
January – April
2014

Transition to Independence

T2I Month – November 2014

Plans are underway for Transition to Independence Month 2014. Key activities have included arranging the launch and preparing information for workers, carers and young people throughout Queensland. Keep your eye out for a launch date.

Key activities planned thus far include:

- A Promotional pack mailed to relevant government and non-government agencies supporting this cohort of young people, featuring a range of useful resources:
- Transition to Independence Month 2014 is to be launched on the Gold Coast this year and will focus on young people sharing their experiences and showcasing best practice in this area of work.
- Signature blocks, posters, stickers, and resources will be mailed out to workers across the state with information flyers to be developed over the coming months.

To ensure you are sent an invite to the launch and to receive a promotional pack email kelly.bucknall@create.org.au

Transition to Independence – Program Design

A draft program framework for transition support up until 21 years has been released by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

The transition of young people from care to independence and adulthood involves both the cessation of legal responsibility by the state for the young person and a major developmental process. Young people in care transition from dependence on the state for their care and support to independence and from adolescence to adulthood. For all young people, transition is multi-faceted and pathways to independence and adulthood are interconnected including relationships, a place to live, education, employment, and health. However, as a result of the circumstances leading to their need for care and their experiences whilst in care, many young people in care are vulnerable and face increased challenges in successfully making the transition to independence and adulthood.

This framework aims to address those vulnerabilities and challenges by providing an integrated and coordinated range of activities and services necessary to resource and support their successful transition from care and adolescence to independence and adulthood. For more information on this project please contact lucas.moore@create.org.au

Transition to Independence Living Allowance (TILA) Changes

TILA has recently undergone a review and changes have been implemented. A significant change is that TILA applications can only be processed by Child Safety Service Centres. If you know young people looking for TILA, you can support them to go through the process with their local Child Safety Service Centre.

Currently in Queensland, young people aged between 15 and 25 (inclusive) years who are either in care or who have left care may contact the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, through their local Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC), for support in applying for TILA. A Child Safety Officer (CSO) will then engage with and support the young person in their application.

To read the eligibility requirements please see <http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/benefits-payments/transition-to-independent-living-allowance-tila/eligibility>

Young people can access the allowance in up to six instalments as agreed with their case worker. The previous 24 month time limit to apply for funding assistance will no longer apply.

Once approval has been received from DSS, the electronic claim for TILA payment is to be submitted online via the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) United Government Gateway (UGG). A registered Business or Administration Officer in the CSSC is required to access the Centrelink online portal (UGG), and complete the application process, and if the young person's application is successful, undertake all financial administration requirements.

New legal service for young people transitioning to independence

LegalPod, is a new legal service recently launched to assist young people from 16 years in the greater Brisbane area with a reach to Deception Bay, Beenleigh and Ipswich. The Queensland Public Interest Law Clearing House (QPILCH) received philanthropic funding for twelve months to establish and operate the program as a trial. QPILCH's Homeless Persons' Legal Service (HPLC) is the service responsible for this legal service. This is a designed legal service diagnosing legal need for young people transitioning from out of home care to independence. They aim to address the correlation of child protection matters and an increased likelihood of homelessness. LegalPod will address similar legal issues to the Homeless Person's Legal Centre – reviewable decisions, guardianship, Centrelink, tenancy, SPER fines and other government decisions as well as training and employment disputes and fines.

'Pods' of solicitors have been trained and will be supervised to do justice work. They will work together to holistically meet the varied legal needs of young people in order to ensure all their legal matters can be dealt with to assist them in their living, educational, employment, health and well-being pursuits. The aim is that each young person will have access to personalised legal services from their designated pod for a four year period, until 21 years of age. All legal matters will be assessed and addressed. For further information or to make a referral contact QPILCH on 3846 6317.

Housing and support

Various changes to Department of Housing including support options have impacted on young people transitioning to independence and are likely to continue to do so. Housing providers are being privatised and various Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) are in place. The Housing 20/20 plan is set to replace many of the MOUs.

The Queensland Homelessness Information Platform (QHIP) will provide a shared tool, assessment and electronic files that move with young people from support services. These files are deemed extremely confidential and access is limited to only those currently working with the young person.

Young people involved with G-Force have offered advice that models of accommodation are needed to bridge the gap between fully supported models such as residential care and foster care to independent living options. Often the major leap from fully supported to total independence creates a sense of isolation and vulnerability and is too much responsibility too fast. For many young people a 'semi supported' model of support could offer an appropriate transition option to lessen the burden of 'too much responsibility, too soon'. These models will be further explored. One such model currently being trialled is a co-tenancy model.

It's OK to Stay

G-Force is currently focusing on supporting Foster and Kinship Carers and their young people to, where possible, maintain placements past 18 years. Feedback received indicates that discussions about support for young people transitioning to independence can sometimes exclude kinship carers and carers who are interested in maintaining placements and relationships.

Expanding information sharing to ensure that kinship carers and foster carers are aware of transition to independence options is necessary. Ensuring all involved in supporting and caring for young people have accurate information about transition processes is key to successful transitioning of young people from care to independence. Often this may mean young people stay with kinship/carers for a longer duration. Feedback demonstrates this is often a mutual desire but not always stated as the reasonable possibility it is.

Child and Youth Engagement

Young people and complaints

After significant discussions with partners of G-Force including the input of young people, a Complaints Form to assist children and young people in raising their concerns about any child protection or system issues has been developed. This offers young people a non-verbal means of communicating feedback. This is expected to be a positive tool in the new child protection service system currently being developed. For a copy of this form please contact Deborah.watson@create.org.au

Encouraging Participation

Young People's Participation Meme: G-Force and in particular CREATE Young Consultants have developed a Meme to encourage young people in speaking up about their needs and experiences. For a copy of this resource please contact kelly.bucknall@create.org.au

The Youth Advocacy Centre's (YAC) Flipside

YAC is launching a website called On the Flipside. It aims to offer positive stories about success in the face of adversity. Young people can upload their positive stories. ontheflipside.com.au will be launched very soon.

Queensland's Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT)

G-Force has been having discussions about developing a resource that outlines simple steps to have a decision reviewed, plus including the experience of approximately three young people who went to QCAT to state their experiences about what happened. This resource will outline what a reviewable decision is and will be available in the near future.

For more information on G-Force please contact lucas.moore@create.org.au