

*Participation of young people in strengthening
leaving and after care practice
at Wesley Dalmar*



Presented by:

**Lauren Schubert (Foster care caseworker, Wesley Dalmar Penrith)
Danielle (Participant, After Care Focus Group)**

Why was this project created?

- Opportunity to determine if aftercare and leaving care policy and practice is complementary to young people's experiences, expectations and predictions.
- Examine young people's perceptions of aftercare and their predictions of how this time will be for them.
- Increase worker's understanding about young people's perceptions of leaving care and how to work best with them at this time.

Young people were asked questions about:

- Their experiences in out of home care.
- Predictive outcomes when they leave care.
- What leaving/after care means to them.
- Their feelings towards DoCS and Dalmar.
- After care services.
- What would make their time of leaving care more positive?

The Results:

Positive aspects of out of home care:

- Good relationship with carer/part of a family/happy home (5 responses)
- Can feel safe and happy (3 responses)
- Being able to stay with brother and sister (2 responses)
- Caseworker/Dalmar activities (2 responses)

Negative aspects of out of home care:

- Not living with/seeing family (5 responses)
- Being split up from brother/sister (4 responses)
- Given label of a "foster kid" (4 responses)
- Fighting with carers and kids (3 responses)

Once you turn 18, where do you think you will choose to live?

Live independently with friend/s	8
Live independently on your own	5
Stay with current foster carers	4
Move back in with your birth family	2
Move in with previous foster carers	1
Other: Semi-independent	1

What do you think will be happening for you when you are 18?

Working	10
Moving out of carer's home	4
Studying	3
Re-establish contact with birth family	2
Living with foster carers	1
Looking after own child	1

What do you think the terms 'leaving care' and 'after care' mean?

Choice and freedom from "the system"	9
Being treated like an adult	6
Increased responsibility	5
Uncertainty	3
Don't Know	1

What sort of feelings do you think you will have when you leave care?

Excited and happy about the future	10
Uncertain about the future	4
Stressed out	4
Supported and cared for	3
Alone	3

What should be part of a leaving care plan?

Assistance with housing	7
Don't know/unsure	6
Money for future	4
Establishment items	4
Assistance with birth family contact	2
Help finding work/study	2
Access to files/help reading	2

Have you heard of any after care services? Yes 3 No 12

Do you know what after care services do? Yes 2 No 13

How do you think leaving care could be made a more positive experience for young people?

Being able to have a say in making decisions
Having a detailed leaving care plan developed well in advance
Being given information about what is happening
Being able to speak with another young person that has left foster care
Being listened to
Having my birth family involved

What does Dalmar do well?

- Policy that every young person over the age of 15 has an after care plan.
- Involve young people in planning and provide them with skills, knowledge and resources.
- Practice in accordance with Children & Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998.
- Referrals to After Care Services and CLAN.
- Support carers to maintain connections with young people after age or 18 or when they leave care.
- Provide for a lengthy supported transition.
- Maintenance of After Care Database and file reading service.
- Development of a living skills assessment tool currently underway.
- Participation in ACWA Leaving Care Working Party (LCWP).
- Promotes on-going training for workers.

Contact Details

Lauren.Schubert@wesleymission.org.au

Phone: 02 4731 4600

Fax: 02 4721 0344

Thank you!