



Wesley Kick Start program

Proudly supported by the Property Industry Foundation (PIF)



The way forward—Wesley Kick Start program

Background

Negative experiences before coming into care, in-care, and after leaving care all have cumulative effects on young people's ability to successfully transition to adulthood.

Research shows that young people leaving care in Australia are more likely to:

- have poor education including early school leaving
- be unemployed and earning lower wages
- be homeless or living in unstable housing arrangements
- have a child at a young age
- be involved in the criminal justice system
- have physical health, mental health and substance abuse problems
- lack informal social support from family and friends.

For example, the 2009 Create Foundation survey, found that:

- 35 per cent of the young people leaving care were homeless in the first year of leaving
- 46 per cent of young men and 22 per cent of young woman with care experience had been involved in The Juvenile Justice System
- 65 per cent of young people did not complete year 12
- 29 per cent were unemployed (compared to the national average of 9.75 per cent)
- 28 per cent were already parents themselves

(Toni Beauchamp, Young People transitioning from Out of Home Care to Adulthood, July 2014)

Currently, many young people leaving care experience a rapid and abrupt end to formal support between the ages of 16 to 18. This could be due to placement breakdown or the lack of services available for leaving care. The Wesley Kick Start program will ensure young people will participate in good preparation and planning for independence with the aim of having positive post-care experience.

How would the program work?

Wesley Kick Start House

The Wesley Kick Start program would be available to a young person for a 12-month period and would enable them to move to independence in a stable, secure environment and find meaningful employment.

The program would support the young person in the following areas:

- developing life skills such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, managing a budget and meeting personal care needs
- accessing infrastructure such as public transport, health and community services
- meeting the obligations of a tenant and developing tenant skills such as respect for neighbours and co-tenants, respect for property, and financial obligations
- working toward training or vocational outcomes

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- where appropriate, working with PIF towards a sustainable apprenticeship in building industry
- developing social and family networks and participating in the broader community.

Wesley Kick Start Annexe House

The Wesley Kick Start Annexe House would be available to young people who have been in the Wesley Kick Start program for between nine and 12 months. It would house an additional six young people who would be required to live independently using the skills they have learned over their time in the Wesley Kick Start program.

The Wesley Kick Start Annexe House would mirror the physical residence of the Wesley Kick Start House but would provide minimal to no support to enable young people to live independently.

Both houses will be adjoined to each other, to:

- give those in the Wesley Kick Start program a visual goal to achieve
- give a sense of emotional support to those living in the Wesley Kick Start Annexe House, as the house parents would still be in proximity should anything go wrong.

The Wesley Kick Start Annexe House would be available for young people for up to 12 months.

During their stay, young people would be required to:

- seek permanent residence once their stay at Annexe House has finished
- maintain full-time work
- pay a decreased amount of rent
- put aside money for saving
- implement the skills they have learned at the Wesley Kick Start House, such as buying food, cooking dinner and household chores.

Partnerships

- Property Industry Foundation – apprenticeships in building industry.
- Wesley Vocational institute based at Carlingford offer Accredited qualification from Certificates to diploma including, business studies, community services, aged care, horticulture, retail hospitality, training and assessment, leisure, and disability.
- Wesley Employment Services, opportunities to gain employment experience in industries such as gardening, cleaning and Wesley Vision Valley.
- Wesley Counselling Services
- Wesley Dalmar wrap-around services including, clinical and education support.



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Staffing Structure

We will be recruiting a couple who will provide 24 hours supervision, they will be trained and assessed as foster carers and receive on-going support and training.

A case manager will be employed to provide case planning support.

Two part time youth workers will be implementing life skills programs with the young people, through group work or targeting individual learning. This will support the leaving care plan.

What would be the outcome for young people?

Through this extended program of supported independence, young people would be equipped and empowered to be fully self-reliant, using the skills they have acquired through the SILP and Annexe House programs. They would also have employment, enabling them to develop their career skills and pay rent and other bills.



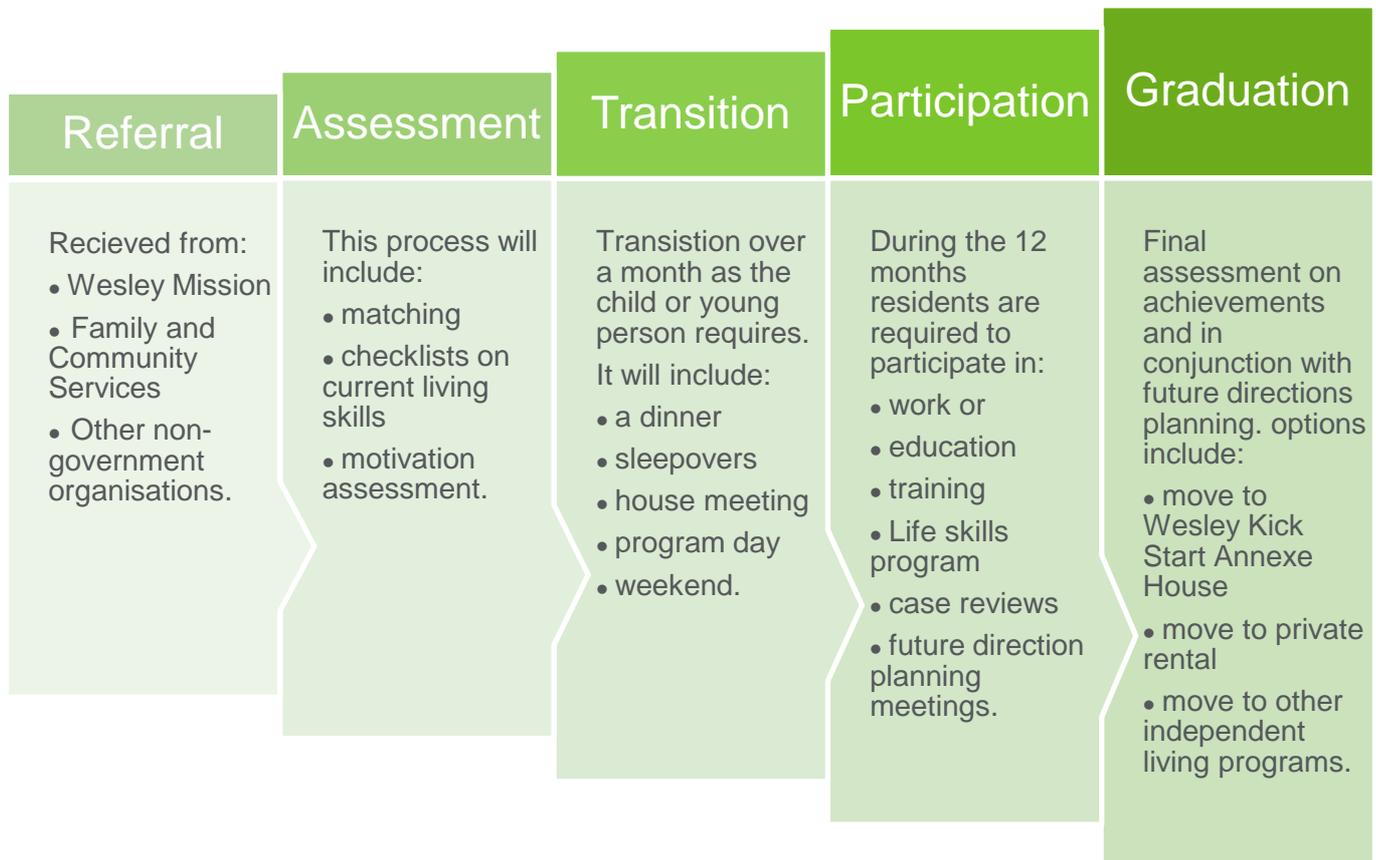


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The young persons' journey



Step 1

Referral

Young people will be referred to the program from case managers in their respective services. They will complete a referral form pointing out the child's strengths, abilities and current level of life skills. The young person will also be required to fill out a youth focused form asking for their reason to want to reside in this program and what they wish to achieve. The two parts of the referral will be taken to a panel consisting of the manager, clinical support, case manager, and house parent to discuss the applicant

Step 2

Assessment

The young person will meet the house parent and case manager to discuss in person the application and their desire to move in to the house with a focus on the young person's goals.

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What do they hope to achieve from participation in this program?

What are their long and short-term goals?

Who are their current support people?

Are they willing to request assistance when needed?

How will they manage living with others?

Can they also be autonomous in specific activities?

Step 3

Transition

After both Young person and Wesley Mission agree that this is a viable program, transition will commence. A schedule will be developed in conjunction with the young person's wishes. It will include:

- a visit to the house to see the premises without the other residents being there
- an evening meal or lunch with the other residents at the house
- a meeting night where programs are discussed with youth worker and house parents with the other residents (a meeting night is the opportunity for young people to participate in developing their program for the week. It will provide options on what they wish to develop in their life skills component and what is coming up for them in which they may need assistance i.e. transport to contact)
- a sleepover to trial their room with the evening/morning routines
- a weekend stay
- set date for moving in and officially joining the program.

The timeline is flexible as this is meant to support success and needs to be continually assessed with the young persons input.

Step 4

Participation

The program will include various mini programs to engage young people whilst not overwhelming them, it is still their home and need for down time and fun is still required.

Case Reviews

There will be six monthly case reviews/ Future directions meetings which consist of a formal gathering of significant people in the child's life. These people include:

- case manager
- house parent



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- clinical
- education
- mentor
- potentially previous carer
- potentially natural family
- teachers.

These reviews will consist of topics that need to be addressed and plans covering the following areas, these areas are then broken down into tasks according to relevant for the young person's goals and our goals for them to become independent well-functioning individuals:

- legal issues
- health
- education
- emotional needs
- life skills update/independence monitor
- contact with significant others/ Family connections and contact
- social development

Life skills program

The Life skills program will have a formal section and informal section. The formal section will consist of group learning with a youth worker going through specific elements of a life skills program (It is suggested the UPA living skills handbook as program of choice). Group session will use the handbook to work on items in the home such as:

- cooking
- cleaning
- using a computer
- washing.

Discussions modules will include:

- relationships
- job interviews
- sexual health
- sexual identity
- application writing
- housing
- financials/budgeting.

In an informal setting, young people will hold their hand books and self-assess during the week and attempt (with support if required) other learning modules:

- catching a train/bus
- going to Centrelink to receive youth allowance
- going to the bank
- shopping for dinner items for a night
- cooking for a group of six
- cooking for one.



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Mentors

Whilst it is important to have a strong relationship with the house parents and case managers all efforts will be made to link the young people with a mentor through Wesley Aunties & Uncles and Wesley Youth Mentoring. The mentor will support the young people through these areas of learning and provide emotional support. When the child moves to independent living (Wesley Kick Start Annexe House) the mentors will follow and stay connected with the young person once they have left the program. The relationship can and hopes to continue beyond the independent program as well.

The steps involved include recruiting suitable volunteer mentors through online resources such as the SEEK website and the Australian Youth Mentoring Network. Other volunteer mentors are also found through the Wesley Mission website and Wesley Aunties & Uncles. The volunteer mentors attend a pre-training interview with the project worker and then attend a two-day training course. This course covers topics such as how to build a mentoring relationship, adolescent development and family relationships, legal issues, values, communication skills and program guidelines.

The matching process takes into consideration the area where both that the young person and volunteer mentor live, their hobbies and interests, and most importantly, their personalities. The matching is done by the Wesley Youth Mentoring project worker with help from the partner service case worker.

Once they are matched the contact for the young person and mentor is four hours per fortnight for a minimum period of 12 months. The match is reviewed at three, six, nine and 12 months.

Education/Employment

The expectations of the residents are to be in school or tertiary education program.

School will be located close to the premises and partnerships will be forged between Wesley Mission and the local high school. For those children who wish to stay in the school they are in, negotiations will be needed around transportation.

Further education will be sourced via Wesley Vocational Institute which offers courses in business studies, community services, aged care, horticulture, retail hospitality, training and assessment, leisure, and disability if appropriate.

Those who choose to work may do so and options with apprenticeships are suggested. They will be supported by the house parents, youth workers and case managers and identified as part of their future direction planning. Once the goal is identified the supports will walk the path alongside the young person and assist them in enrolling into relevant courses, programs, and apprenticeships. They will further implement the skills they have been learning through the program such as resume writing and interview preparation.

Ideally, a partnership with the Property Industry Foundation is created that some of the young people will gain apprenticeships within the property industry through those companies who work alongside the Property Industry Foundation in their charitable works.

On-going support will be dependent on need, location of employment and skills of the young person.

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Step 5

Graduation

For those who completely leave the Wesley Kick Start program, Wesley Mission's aftercare program will keep connections with any child that has exited the care of Wesley Mission and link them back up with those who have worked with them before if required.

Those young people that achieve graduation to the Wesley Kick Start Annexe House will have to be self-sufficient and show they can implement the skills they learnt in the Wesley Kick Start program. At this stage whilst they live independently the relationships are still able to continue due to the location of the two programs being next door to each other.

It is suggested the house parent in conjunction with the youth workers but on regular barbecues for both houses to engage and strengthen on-going relationships. This may eventuate to having the graduates support those in the Wesley Kick Start program in building relationships as well and becoming mentors in due time, supporting the new young people to achieve moving to independence.

