

|  |
| --- |
| Better Futures and Home Stretch support for young people |
| Information for permanent carers |
| OFFICIAL |

Contents

[Purpose 1](#_Toc86146408)

[Background 1](#_Toc86146409)

[Eligibility 2](#_Toc86146410)

[Better Futures 2](#_Toc86146411)

[Home Stretch 2](#_Toc86146412)

[Service providers 2](#_Toc86146413)

[What if a young person identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander? 3](#_Toc86146414)

[More information 3](#_Toc86146415)

[For young people and carers 3](#_Toc86146416)

# Purpose

This factsheet provides carers of young people on permanent care orders with information about Better Futures and Home Stretch. These programs have recently expanded to include young people in permanent care.

# Background

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring young people who are, or who have been on, permanent care orders are supported from age 15 years and nine months to transition to adulthood. The government will invest $38.9 million over the next four years and $13.8 million ongoing to ensure these young people have access to two different programs:

* Better Futures, which provides individual support to help in the transition to adulthood
* Home Stretch, which provides an allowance to support a young person’s living arrangements, case work support and flexible funding.

Both these programs are explained below.

# Eligibility

From 1 July 2021 all young people on permanent care orders are eligible for Better Futures from age 15 years and nine months and Home Stretch from age 18. Young people will receive support up until their 21st birthday.

Young people who turned 18 before 1 July 2021 are not eligible for Better Futures or Home Stretch. However, they may be able to get other supports. For more information, visit [the department’s website](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/leaving-care) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/leaving-care>.

# Better Futures

Better Futures is a new way of supporting young people transitioning from care. Better Futures aims to engage earlier with young people, supporting them to have an active voice in their transition planning.

A Better Futures worker provides secondary consultation to care teams, lending expertise to the transition process. Support from the Better Futures worker increases as the young person prepares to transition from care.

Better Futures aims to support young people achieve successful and independent adult lives; helping them to have an active voice in decisions about their future and guiding their transition to adulthood and independent living across a range of life areas, including housing, health and wellbeing, education, employment and community and cultural connections.

Better Futures service response can include:

* case work support to help with a young person’s life goals
* information and advice about other services or moving house
* access to flexible funding
* community and cultural connections, supporting a young person’s participation in their local community
* Home Stretch.

Better Futures offers flexible funding to support a young person’s goals for independence. Support from Better Futures may include:

* Clothes that may be needed for work
* university textbooks
* driving lessons
* household set up
* mental health support
* sporting and community activities

# Home Stretch

Home Stretch is available for young people on permanent care orders from 18 to 21 years of age.

If a young person is living away from their carers/guardians, or is planning to move out of home, they can access the Home Stretch Allowance (Independent Accommodation). This allowance will help with the search for housing, the move, rent and with ongoing living expenses.

If a young person continues to live with their carer/guardian once they finish school, the Home Stretch allowance will be paid to the carer to support their placement.

Home Stretch provides a key worker who can help with things like staying in school or going to TAFE or university, getting a job, getting your licence, or helping with other things that might be needed. Flexible funding is also available to help with expenses for study, work, health care (not covered by Medicare) and activities which assist the young person’s transition to independence. You and the young person can talk to a Better Futures worker about flexible funding and how it can help the young person meet their goals for independence.

# Service providers

Community service organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations across Victoria deliver Better Futures and Home Stretch. This means the young person in your care will be linked to a Better Futures provider close to where they live. The Better Futures providers will also help the young person to access the Home Stretch program once they turn 18.

Permanent Care and Adoptive Families (PCA Families) is the key agency that refers young people on permanent care orders into these programs. PCA Families has a long history of supporting permanent carers.

PCA Families will refer all eligible young people on permanent care orders to the Better Futures provider in the young person’s area. They will contact all eligible young people (and/or their carers) as they approach 15 years and nine months of age. PCA Families will provide information about what the Better Futures and Home Stretch programs offer and will organise a referral to the closest provider.

If you or the young person in your care are not sure whether they are eligible for these programs, you can contact PCA Families directly. If the young person is eligible, PCA Families will process the referral. If the young person is not eligible, PCA Families will refer to other services that can help the young person with their transition to independence.

## What if a young person identifies as Aboriginal?

The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) is the key agency that refers Aboriginal young people on permanent care orders into these programs.

VACCA will refer young people to an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation for Better Futures and Home Stretch support. The young person can also choose to get support from a mainstream Better Futures provider.

# More information

To find out if the young person in your care is eligible for Better Futures and Home Stretch, please email PCA Families <info@pcafamilies.org.au> or call 9020 1833 or email VACCA on pcopathways@vacca.org

## For young people and carers

For more information on Better Futures, including a list of all Better Futures service providers, visit the [Better Futures webpage](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>.

For more information on Home Stretch, visit the [Home Stretch webpage](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch>.

To learn more about PCA Families, visit the [PCA Families website](https://www.pcafamilies.org.au) <https://www.pcafamilies.org.au>.

|  |
| --- |
| To receive this publication in an accessible format phone 9096 7257, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email the Children and Families Policy Branch <childrenyouthfamilies@dffh.vic.gov.au>Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.© State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, October 2021.Available at the DFFH Providers website <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>. |