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| Better Futures and Home Stretch support for young people |
| Information for young people on permanent care orders |
| OFFICIAL |

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# Purpose

This factsheet provides young people who are on, or who have been on, a permanent care order with information about Better Futures and Home Stretch programs.

# Background

The Victorian Government wants to make sure young people on permanent care orders are supported with their move into adulthood. If you’re on a permanent care order, you can take part in two different government programs:

* Better Futures, which offers individual support to help prepare for your transition to adulthood
* Home Stretch, which provides an allowance to support your 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

## What does this mean for you?

You will work with a Better Futures worker (development coach) to think about your goals and how you can achieve them. This means you work one on one with your development coach, who will offer support based on your situation and needs. The aim is to provide you with the skills and support you need to thrive throughout adulthood.

# Home Stretch

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

If you are living away from your carers/guardians, or are planning to move out of home, you can get the Home Stretch Allowance (Independent Accommodation). This will help in your search for housing, the move, rent and ongoing living expenses.

If you plan to stay with your carer/guardian once you finish school, the Home Stretch allowance will be paid to your carer.

Home Stretch provides a key worker who can help you with things like staying in school or going to TAFE or university, getting a job, getting your licence, or helping with other things that you might need. Flexible funding is also available to help with expenses for study, work, health care (not covered by Medicare) and activities that help with your transition to independence. You and your parent/carer can talk to a Better Futures worker about flexible funding and how it can help you reach your goals for independence.

## What does this mean for you?

There is support available to help you live where you want to live while transitioning to adulthood. You can talk with your Better Futures worker about what you need. They will support you to reach your goals for independence.

# Service providers

Community service organisations and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations deliver Better Futures and Home Stretch across the state. This means you will be linked to a Better Futures provider close to where you live. The provider will also help you to access the Home Stretch program once you turn 18.

If you identify as an Aboriginal young person, the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) will refer you to an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation for Better Futures and Home Stretch support. Or you can choose to get support from a mainstream Better Futures provider.

You can find a list of Better Futures service providers on the Better Futures webpage <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>.

# More information

To find out if you are eligible for Better Futures and Home Stretch, please email Permanent Care and Adoptive Families <info@pcafamilies.org.au> or call 9020 1833 or email VACCA pcopathways@vacca.org

## For young people and carers

* Visit the [Better Futures on the Services webpage](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/better-futures>.
* Visit the [Home Stretch on the Services webpage](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch>.
* Visit the [Permanent Care and Adoptive Families website](https://www.pcafamilies.org.au) <https://www.pcafamilies.org.au>.

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