

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–2024

Answer to question on notice

Asked by: Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Addressed to: Michael Pettersson MLA

Reference: Enhanced Care/Community Services Directorate

Hearing: 18 February 2025

In relation to: Enhanced Care

Question received: 18 February 2025

Answer Due: 25 February 2025

I note that the Children and Young People Act has legislated for ‘enhanced care’ for 18-21 year olds.

1. What is the objective of this legislative requirement?
2. Can you tell me what programs have been put in place so far?
 - a. Please provide details of program names and associated budgets and staffing allocations?
 - b. Who has oversight of these programs and what evaluation processes are in place at the moment?

Suzanne Orr MLA: The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:

1. The objective of the legislative requirement in the *Children and Young People Act 2008* for ‘enhanced care’ for 18-21-year-olds is to ensure that young people transitioning from out-of-home care receive continued support and services as they move into independent adulthood.

This extension of care strengthens the ACT Government's commitment to a ‘continuum of care’ model, aligned to the *Next Steps for Our Kids 2022-2030* strategy and *Safe and Supported* national framework.

The new legislative changes create an obligation to provide support to care leavers until they turn 21 and gives the Director-General the discretion to continue to provide

support up to the age of 25. The aim is to improve outcomes for care leavers by providing consistent and flexible support throughout their transition to adulthood.

2. a. Current Extended Care programs

With the implementation of *A Step Up for Our Kids 2015-2020* a commitment was made to extend the continuum of care for care leavers up to 25 years of age. As a result, in 2018, two new programs were implemented (and are currently in place):

- Extended Continuum of Care (18-21 years) - Support for Young Adults and their Carers (2018)
- Aftercare Support for Care Leavers to 25 years (2018)

Both schemes have been administered by the ACT Together consortium (which ended in December 2024) and are now provided by Barnardos, primarily under the Community Adolescent Program (CAP).

Extended Continuum Care Support (18-21 years)

Currently, the extended continuum of care is an opt in program for carers that enables a young person to remain in a safe and secure home with their carers up until they are 21 years old or, until such time as they are ready to transition to independent living. The aim of the scheme is to set young people up for success and ensure carers continue to receive an allowance as per Children, Youth and Family subsidy guidelines to ensure young people's needs can be met.

After Care Support (up to 25 years)

Young people are entitled to After Care Support up until they turn 25 years old, providing they have previously been in a statutory out of home care placement. Young People can self-refer to CAP if they are over 18 years old or it can commence when they are 18 years old as part of a transition plan.

After Care Support under the current CAP can take various forms, from ad hoc assistance accessing universal and secondary services to more intensive outreach support over a prolonged period.

Extended Care Arrangements

The Government is implementing an extension to current supports available to young people transitioning from out of home care. In line with *Next Steps for our Kids 2022-2030*, \$10 million was allocated in the 2024-25 Budget over 4 years, to enhance extended care supports which will include:

- Improved transition planning and access to support services for young people from 15 years of age.
- Improved pathways and support for young people to access appropriate housing and accommodation.
- Connection to significant people including workers and carers who can provide the young person with reassurance, warm referrals to services and problem-solving support as they develop the skills and confidence to live independently.
- Improved connection to community, family and culture.

The model provides flexible brokerage packages of varying intensities to work alongside young adults to build their capacity and confidence for independence and support their transition to adulthood.

Key services may include but are not limited to housing – access and subsidy; mental health and wellbeing support; trauma counselling; medical and dental; developing aspirations and opportunities to achieve; living skills, including support to live independently and find employment; strengthened relationships with family and informal supports; and assistance transitioning from out of home care /youth services to adult services.

Allocation of support packages will be based on assessment of need with decisions made on a case by case basis and determined through a joint Children, Youth and Families and service provider/s panel process.

Work is underway to brief providers on the new model of extended care and to agree implementation arrangements.

2 b. Oversight and Evaluation

In terms of current oversight/governance mechanisms:

- The Intensive and Long Term Care team support the continuum of care and After Care Support briefing process, preparing all funding briefs for approval by the Executive Group Manager and above; and
- CAP placements and availability are reviewed weekly at the Referral and Placement Case Mix Committee.

The 2024-25 Budget included \$100,000 for an external evaluation of the extended care program.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Social Policy

Signature:

Acting Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Suzanne Orr MLA

Date:

27/02/25