

Strong Foundations, Strong Futures: Extended care and supported transitions from out-of-home care

This project was conducted by Victoria Mubango under the supervision of Tim Moore for Marist 180 (2025).

Background

Young people leaving out-of-home care often face disrupted relationships, housing instability and limited education or employment opportunities once support ends at 18. Extended care and transition programs in Australia and overseas aim to provide ongoing relationships, housing and tailored support into early adulthood. Evidence shows clear benefits, but access and coordination remain uneven. This review consolidates current research to identify what helps young people move successfully from care to adulthood.

What we found

1. Relational continuity and interdependence

Ongoing, trusting relationships with carers, mentors and support workers beyond 18 are key to success. Programs like *Staying Close* and *Staying Put* build emotional security and social capital. Consistent, culturally-matched mentors reduce homelessness and isolation.

2. Housing stability and flexible pathways

Secure housing underpins all other outcomes. Supervised or subsidised options that combine accommodation with coaching and emotional support achieve the best results.

3. Long-term, developmentally appropriate support

Rigid eligibility rules exclude the most vulnerable. Culturally safe, trauma-responsive, youth-led programs strengthen engagement and independence.

4. Collaborative, integrated systems

Cross-sector coordination across housing, education, employment and health enables smoother transitions. Fragmented or short-term funding disrupts progress; integrated, place-based systems sustain outcomes.

Our approach

Scoping review of 35+ studies guided by PRISMA-ScR.

Inclusion of both policy analyses and program evaluations.

Key outcomes examined: housing stability, education and employment participation, social and emotional wellbeing, and relational continuity.

Implications for practice and policy

- Make **relational continuity** central to extended care.
- Provide **secure, flexible housing** linked with relational and cultural supports.
- Embed **co-design, youth leadership and cultural safety** in planning.
- Strengthen **cross-agency partnerships** and long-term funding.
- Use **evaluation and lived-experience feedback** to improve practice.

