



EVALUATION OF THE WA HOME STRETCH TRIAL

FINAL REPORT

PREPARED BY:

Dr Lynelle Watts, Bronte Walter, Darcee Schulze, Dr David Hodgson and Professor
Donna Chung

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Here we present an executive summary of the findings of the Evaluation of the WA Home Stretch Trial.

Background

The WA Home Stretch model is the result of a sector wide policy co-design process undertaken in 2018-2019. This process resulted in the Home Stretch Core Elements of Safety Net, Transition Support and Support Circles a base from which to create prototypes (practices, processes) to test in a service delivery context. The WA Home Stretch Trial was established at the Fremantle District with an initial onboarding of 15 young people. This later expanded to include a further 25 young people. Unlike other Australian jurisdictions where existing services were remodeled to provide Home Stretch extended care WA utilised a design process which:

‘prioritised young people’s voices in the development of a model of enhanced support that effectively simulates an extension of care within the Western Australian legislative and service system context. The co-design highlighted the need for an extended care arrangement to be optional, and that the direct support provided to young people should be provided from youth workers employed outside of the child protection system’ (Lund & Kazim, 2021, p. 44).

During the Trial the Anglicare WA Home Stretch team engaged in a partnership with Yorganop - an Aboriginal foster care agency - to inform the prototyping process of the core elements along with the developing practices, principles and processes. The aim of the partnership with Yorganop, which became known as Nitra Nop Yorga Ngulla Mia (Our Boys and Girls are Staying Home) was to ensure that the various elements of the Home Stretch model being tested and developed could be adapted to become culturally safe for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The result of this partnership resulted in the reconceptualisation of Support Circles to become an overarching principle of Home Stretch enhanced care, rather than as a core element. Both organisations acknowledged the importance of this partnership to the development of the Home Stretch model.

From these processes the WA Home Stretch Trial has resulted in a set of core principles and elements that can be scaled up to further enhance the support to young people leaving care in Western Australia.

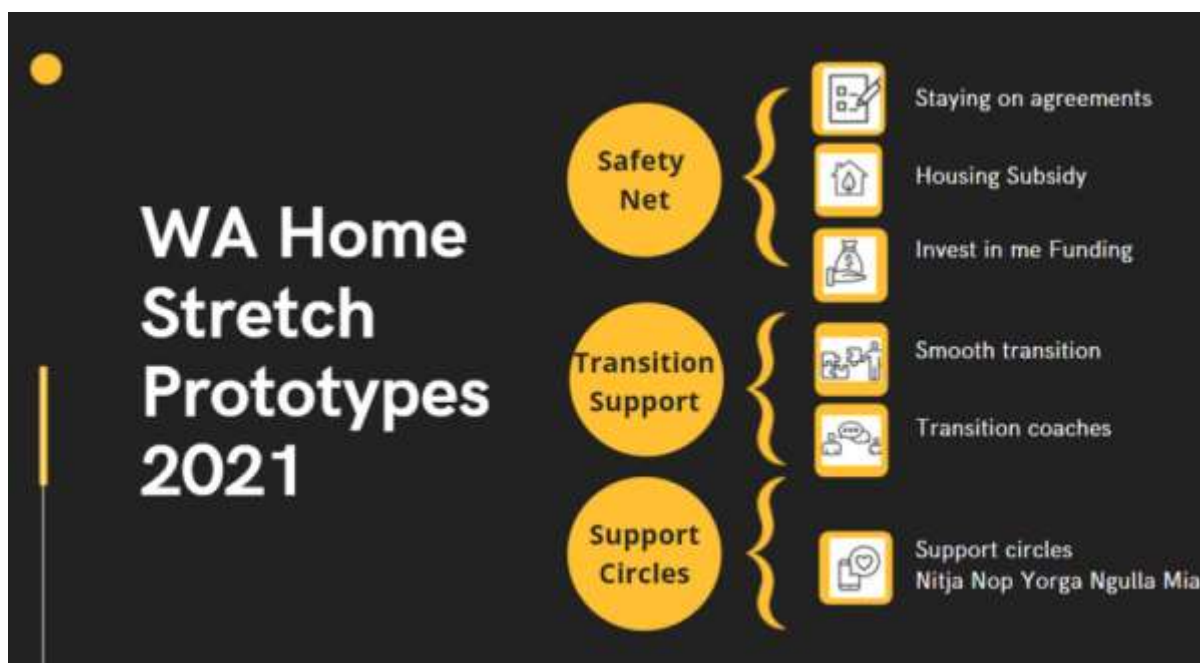
What is the Home Stretch model?

The Model began with these Core elements from the 2018-2019 co- design process and the WA Home Stretch Trial utilised a process of further testing and co-design with stakeholders to elaborate the design. See *Figure 1* for Home Stretch Prototypes as at 2021.

The Anglicare WA Home Stretch team; the Youth Advisory Group (YAG); the Home Stretch Steering Group; Fremantle District Staff; Yorganop team members; Young people; foster carers and other community stakeholders have all played a role in the process of prototyping and testing the core elements of the Home Stretch Model. This has resulted in the building of shared language across

different parts of the system - young people involved, policy and sector practitioners, government- about what each element of the model entails and changes and responses are needed systemically to incorporate the learning from the trial so that the wider system can more effectively offer enhanced care for young people moving to independence.

Figure 1: WA Home Stretch Prototypes



'I found everything that was said in the YAGs to be very consistent with what we hear from young people all the time... it felt really good that something was really tangibly being put in place' – Steering Group member

'[It has] been a really good opportunity to see what that kind of continuum of care can look like when you've got a team that's dedicated to that leaving care age bracket and how they interact with Home Stretch.' – Communities Worker

Evaluation Aims

1. Understand and document what difference the Home Stretch Trial Program can make to the lives of young people participating in the project
2. Document and strengthen the program logic of the Trial Program's emerging strategies, characteristics and practices that address the diverse and complex experiences of young people leaving care
3. Identify and document aspects of the Trial that are foundational to better outcomes and can be replicated or suggest important system changes

4. To include the expertise of young people with out of home care experiences in the design of the evaluation and emerging model of practice
5. To document the ways in which young people's expertise has been influential in the design and implementation of the Home Stretch Trial
6. Identify any aspects which are influenced by the local context in which it is being trialled and develop draft principles of locality based design for Home Stretch

Evaluation Findings

Below we present key findings against the evaluation questions.

- 1 Role of co-design and prototyping in engaging stakeholders
 - Stakeholder co-design was central to building an understanding and for supporting central involvement of young people.
 - Co-design created a shared language amongst participants about enhanced care.
 - Some stakeholders were not included in the original co-design (foster carers; parents who have been involved with Child Protection & Family Support).
- 2 What is the aftercare response that is unique to the home stretch model?
 - Safety Net - includes 3 types of funding (Staying on; Rent subsidies and Invest in Me).
 - Transition support - Coaches who provide practical support, brokerage and mentoring working alongside young people towards independent living and fostering interdependent connections and assisting with a smooth transition from care via service system collaboration and communication.
 - Support Circles - warm referral; a trauma-informed relational practice process focused on building interdependent networks of support for young people.
- 3 What contextual challenges to achieving outcomes have been experienced?
 - Establishing trust across different organisations takes time and energy
 - Staffing and turnover impacts on continuity of care
 - COVID-19 presented a challenge during the evaluation - due to lockdowns and restrictions some processes took longer; recruitment of young people took extra time.
- 4 What contextual facilitators to achieving outcomes have been experienced?
 - Information was considered key to engaging with young people but it is more likely to be taken on if it is warranted by someone they trust or have a relationship with.
 - Time to make a decision about taking up the opportunity was important.
 - Informing carers was a key enabler of Staying on agreements.
 - Opt in and Opt out was identified as a unique feature of Home Stretch design and was welcomed by the young people participating.

5 What are the differences in young people's lives following participation in the trial?

- Alleviation of homelessness.
- Opportunities to build relationships with coaches.
- Access to role models and others to support the decision making processes of young people participating.
- Continuity in education was facilitated by access to Invest in Me funding.

6 What do members of the YAG hope to achieve through their participation in the trial?

- YAG members were motivated by wanting the system to change for the better.
- To advocate for others using their experience as a catalyst for change.
- Social interaction and learning from others were considered key benefits.
- Members welcomed the opportunity to participate with Yorganop and felt they had learnt a great deal from the experience.

Scaling Up Home Stretch

This section discusses the evaluation question related to scaling up the WA Home Stretch model for delivery in districts across Western Australia.

7 What aspects of the trial could be replicated in other localities?

- Structure of funding (brokerage model)
- Coaching model
- Early engagement
- Smooth transitions are all elements that are replicable.

It is recommended, however, that before contracting or establishing a Home Stretch program in each District, a co-design process is undertaken which is aimed at bringing together local stakeholders. The purpose is not to redesign the Core Elements of the Home Stretch model but it would have the aim of initiating community readiness, local collaboration and provide opportunities for exploration of service gaps. This would aid in finding local solutions for adapting the Home Stretch approach. A place-based approach is key to ensuring the elements of Home Stretch are replicated effectively.

8 What aspects of the trial are likely to be varied according to local conditions?

There is likely to be some variation depending on the existing service system and local cultures. Building local and state-wide practice infrastructures such as Communities of Practice and commissioning providers after co-design processes, mentioned above, will assist with managing local variations. Local Communities of Practice should include young people to inform their on-going practices.

Scaling Up Home Stretch in WA

Our recommendations are aimed at what actions could be taken to support the scaling up of Home Stretch across WA. We present them according to sector responsible for leaving care services:

- Department of Communities (as Policy makers and service contractors)
- Department of Communities (CPFS) (as service delivery)
- Community Sector (as service delivery and stakeholders)

Department of Communities - as Policy makers and service contractors

Dept. of Communities	Purpose	Outcome
Establish a state-wide Home Stretch Steering group to support any Scale up process; Chaired by ACCHO representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to the practice infrastructure needed for adoption of Home Stretch Core Elements • Ensures representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in Home Stretch processes 	Facilitation and dissemination of learnings from Home Stretch Trial
Utilise co-design processes undertaken in each district to facilitate readiness for Home Stretch service <i>prior</i> to contracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaption of Home Stretch program to local needs/networks • Prospective Home Stretch providers are supported to deliver the Core elements 	Locally based Home Stretch providers are supported and are able to provide a place-based Home Stretch program
Support an extension of a Home Stretch Trial co-design focussed on practices with young people with complex needs (e.g. Residential care; young people accessing NDIS; foster carers; people in Regional areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring together diverse stakeholders to inform policy & practice navigating NDIS • Builds knowledge for translation of Home Stretch to regional areas • Includes stakeholders who were not included in the original co-design 	Builds pathways for transitions to independence for young people who need NDIS support and contributes to addressing regional challenges and leverage local capacity

Department of Communities (CPFS) – as service delivery

CPFS & Districts	Purpose	Outcome
Explore co-location of Home Stretch providers in District offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aids in building inter-organisational collaboration 	Assists with Smooth transitions via warm referral processes
Establish a Leaving Care Practice Specialist (LCPS) in each District (along the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to practice infrastructure for Leaving Care processes 	Signals the importance of focus on Leaving Care planning

same principles as the Senior Practice Development Officer (SPDO)

- Develop a practice specialism
- Facilitates relationships and/or co-location with local Home Stretch providers

Facilitates knowledge of entitlements across services system

Establish a state-wide LCPS network across the Districts

- Provides a Community of Practice for dissemination of best practice in care leaver planning and support
- Contribute to future policy development on leaving care services

Dissemination of knowledge about the current needs of young people leaving care

LCPS establishes (where absent) or collaborates with Home Stretch providers & local networks to increase the support young people are able to access

- LCPS role aims to build and/or contribute to local service system supports for young people
- Provides a network link between CPFS and (local and state-wide) service systems

Increases the likelihood of young people gaining access to support post leaving care

Community Sector – as service delivery stakeholders

Community Sector

Purpose

Outcome

Provide on-going facilitation and support of care experienced young people to participate in future Home Stretch co-design and policy processes

- Advocacy with and for young people to participate in processes that affect them

The experience of Care Leavers continues to be included in policy processes

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations included in future development of culturally safe Home Stretch practices.

- Builds on the learnings from the Anglicare WA - Yorganop partnership for culturally safe leaving care practices

System wide change to support culturally safe transitions to interdependent living for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Establish workforce development (metropolitan & regional) for increasing the skills and knowledge for working with young people across the service system

- Ensures young people are able to access skilled coaches and case workers who understand their particular needs

Home Stretch providers will be able to draw on a skilled workforce across the service system

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Youth Advisory Group, Anglicare WA, Yorganop and the District office of Fremantle in addition to the Home Stretch Steering Group have engaged in many processes, meetings, and practices to produce a blueprint for a significant step change in extended care services within Western Australia.

It should be acknowledged that the service system already incorporated many aspects of the Home Stretch model including care planning and transition services and that many young people have experienced good support in these services. What most would agree with is that the system can be improved and Home Stretch offers that opportunity. What the Home Stretch trial has contributed is the incorporation of the voices and experiences of young people in the development of processes that affect them. There is a chance now to build on this significant body of practice work to make a real difference for care leavers in this state.

Background

Current statistics and national and international research evidence point to the need for reforms to out of home care arrangements once young people are at leaving age. Various approaches to extended care have been trialled in other locations and this evaluation report presents the Western Australian initiative, the Home Stretch Trial.

There is an urgency to redress the growing numbers of children placed in out-of-home care (OHC) and improve the poor outcomes for those leaving OHC as they transition to independence. OHC is usually the 'last option' of the state when the risk to children's safety and wellbeing is considered too great to remain in their homes. In WA, the proportion of Aboriginal children and young people in OHC is unacceptably high. The rate of Australian First Nations children in out of home care is 10 times the rate for non-Indigenous children.

Young adults with out of home care experience have poorer outcomes compared with their peers without care experience. State responsibility for children's safety has traditionally ended at age 18, with diminishing support for young people. The young people are also not required to have contact with state authorities. Research has shown that the reduction in support has often been associated with multiple forms of disadvantage and poor outcomes for young people exiting OHC, including higher levels of homelessness and transitory lifestyles, lower levels of educational achievement, greater poverty and unemployment, poorer physical and mental health and greater contact with the criminal justice system (Mendes 2010; Cashmore et.al 2015). The lack of mandatory support beyond 18 years in key areas such as health, housing and education contributes to the gap widening with age (Mendes & Snow 2016, FaHCSIA 2010, Deloitte Access Economics 2016). An important difference for this group of young people was that they were often forced into instant adulthood. Unlike their peers, they could not choose to develop their independence at their own pace and often have not had anyone they can fall back on (Mendes & Snow 2016, FaHCSIA 2010). The best available research in Australia (Mendes 2010, Mendes & Snow 2016) and internationally (Daly 2012, Greeson 2015, Everson-Hock 2011) indicates the following factors are important to promote the transition from OHC to independence: i) support workers being a stable feature in young people's lives; ii) encouraging ongoing contact with family; iii) ensuring they possess basic independent living skills; iv) ensuring OHC leavers have a combination of social and practical supports in programs; and v) a supportive community network.

Context for Extended Care

There has been a growing group that includes human service organisations, young people's advocacy groups, philanthropic organisations, researchers, and activists all calling for an extension of the leaving care age from 18 to 21 years. Nationally, these efforts have been coordinated through the Home Stretch campaign which is seeking changes from state and territory governments.

As the largest parent of all, we are seeking all state and territory governments to provide an option, whereby the provision of care can be extended to any young person needing or seeking this, until 21 years, much like what is happening in any other family setting in Australia. We believe that giving

young people in state care the extended care option, will provide them with the platform to make the right start in life and enjoy a better long term life outcome.

State and territory governments have also been making various out of home care policy reforms. In Western Australia, the Hon. Simone McGurk, Minister for Child Protection, announced an extended care pilot in March 2019, with Anglicare WA leading the Home Stretch Trial based in Southern Perth. A key aspect of the development of the Home Stretch extended care trial was that the co-design process with the community services sector and care leavers was central to the process. The Home Stretch Trial was to focus on 18–21-year-olds who were leaving OHC to address essential life domains that would support their transition to independence including housing, employment, training and education, health, development of their circles of support/security and independent living skills. The Trial involves the employment of coaches to work with young people individually around their various needs and requirements to support them. A key underpinning of the program was the flexibility of the approach to meet individualised needs.

To respond to the large number of Aboriginal young people in OHC, Anglicare WA partnered with Yorganop, to co-design an Aboriginal-led extended care program that will promote cultural safety and responsiveness in its model of practice. This development of the Trial was not included in the evaluation.

In WA, the Home Stretch Trial is governed by a Youth Advisory Group of young people who had lived experience with out of home care and a Steering Committee with representatives from key organisations involved with young people from service delivery and policy as well as advocacy bodies and researchers. The Steering Committee and the Youth Advisory Group met regularly throughout the life of the Trial enabling a detailed understanding and involvement in its implementation.

Following the re-election of the WA Labor Government at the state election in March 2021 it was announced that extended care would be made available to all young people leaving care in WA. In period 2019-21, the average number of young people leaving care annually in WA was 218 (Department of Communities, 2020, 2021). An important consideration with the evaluation is the scalability of the Trial as it is implemented across the state in its next iterations.

The Curtin Social Work Research Team, led by Dr Lynelle Watts, was contracted to undertake an independent evaluation of the Home Stretch Trial as team members are currently conducting large scale research into out of home care and they have considerable expertise in program evaluation. The evaluation was contracted by Anglicare WA as the Trial's program provider and was focused on the Fremantle trial site.

In the following sections the evaluation approach is described and the findings to date documented.

Evaluation Aims

The evaluation planning commenced prior to the Trial beginning. As this was a Trial in development and being conducted over a short time period, the evaluation was concentrated on beginning phases of how it was being established and what the early

findings were once it was running. Working through the evaluation aim was a collaborative process with Anglicare WA, DoC policy representative and Fremantle DoC staff involved in leaving care services. As the Trial was a new addition to the extended care landscape in WA, it was critical that the evaluation was able to reveal the processes of the Trial's establishment, its

The evaluation had a number of aims which were focused on three aspects: capturing the processes and practices emerging as the Trial was implemented, identifying the implications for the scaling up of extended care in WA in the future and documenting young people's experiences of both the YAG and Trial participants to understand how they influenced the Trial.

1. Understand and document what difference the Home Stretch Trial Program can make to the lives of young people participating in the project
2. Document and strengthen the program logic of the Trial Program's emerging strategies, characteristics and practices that address the diverse and complex experiences of young people leaving care
3. Identify and document aspects of the Trial that are foundational to better outcomes and can be replicated or suggest important system changes
4. To include the expertise of young people with out of home care experiences in the design of the evaluation and emerging model of practice
5. To document the ways in which young people's expertise has been influential in the design and implementation of the Home Stretch Trial
6. Identify any aspects which are influenced by the local context in which it is being trialled and develop draft principles of locality-based design for Home Stretch

A limitation of the evaluation was that the time available did not allow for gathering of longer term outcome data from Trial participants. This will be critical in the next phases and when the extended care is rolled out state wide.

Co-researcher involvement

In line with current practices and research in the area of out-of-home care, the Home Stretch Trial sought to include young people in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Trial as much as possible. It is widely acknowledged that the meaningful inclusion of young people in research has many benefits, to the quality of the research and to young people (Moore, Noble-Carr, & McArthur, 2016). In addition to involving the YAG in focus groups and Trial participants in interviews, a third form of involvement in the evaluation was undertaken. This involved training young people as researchers with the project. The term co-researcher was used as young people paired with a Curtin team member to co-interview practitioners involved with Home Stretch. Members of Home Stretch's YAG were recruited to be trained as peer researchers. Three co-

researchers completed all three sessions, and two had on-going involvement interviewing practitioners. Co-researchers conducted six practitioner interviews in total.

Training sessions

The sessions took place at the Anglicare office in East Perth, as it was a central location, and attendees were remunerated for their time with a gift card at each session they attended (as well as for practitioner interviews they conducted). The first session served as an introduction to research, evaluation, and the role of co-researchers. It also covered ethics and informed consent. Co-researchers also highlighted during the session the interview schedule could be improved with clearer and more accessible language. Therefore, the second session was dedicated to rewriting the interview schedule that would be used to interview practitioners. The co-researchers were forthcoming with ideas and prompts for the research team in reconsidering the questions and language in the interview schedule with the team later reflecting the exercise had both enhanced the quality of the schedule and fostered collaboration between the co-researchers and Curtin team. An additional third session was held to explore informed consent and confidentiality in greater detail before covering interviewing skills. In this session, co-researchers also observed a simulated interview and practised interviewing.

Methodology

The Home Stretch Trial Evaluation is a multi-method design to capture the complexity of young people's experiences and gain an understanding of whether the range and types of supports and services available through HS and other services can assist young people to transition to an independent adulthood which align to their needs. Based on the aims of the evaluation outlined above, the following research questions were developed in collaboration with staff from Anglicare to guide the evaluation:

1. In developing the model, how have the prototyping processes operated in engaging with stakeholders and shaped the ways in which the Trial is proceeding?
 - a. How have different groups of stakeholders shaped the model and the micro practices of the coaches and mentors with Trial participants?
2. What are the specific ways in which the Trial provides an after care response which may not otherwise be available to young people exiting out of home care?
3. How are the anticipated outcomes for participants' in the Trial being achieved?
 - a. What are some of the contextual facilitators and challenges to achieving outcomes?
 - b. Are there any unanticipated outcomes from the Trial?
4. What were the reasons for young people agreeing to participate in the Trial?
5. Are there differences in young people's lives following participation in the Trial and what are these differences?
6. What aspects of the Trial could be replicated in other localities and what aspects are likely to be varied according to local conditions?
7. What do members of the Youth Advisory Group hope they will be able to achieve through their participation?

The use of qualitative methods was necessary to document the processes of co-design and the prototype of emerging model. The original Trial site at Fremantle provided a relatively small group of young people for the Trial so it was therefore important to capture the details of the work as it emerged. The following data collection methods and data sources were used to achieve the aims of the evaluation and address the research questions.

- Individual interviews
- Focus groups
- Analysis of administrative data

Interviews

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with four different participant groups:

1. Young people in Home Stretch Trial
2. Staff from Department of Communities Fremantle District
3. Anglicare WA Home Stretch Staff and Steering Committee
4. Foster carers involved in Home Stretch Trial

Young People

Interviews with young people in the Home Stretch trial were conducted over two waves of data collection approximately six months apart. Participants recruited to the evaluation from the Home Stretch trial were invited to participate in one semi-structured interview for Wave 1 and one for Wave 2. Interviews covered eight domains with an additional domain if the young person was a parent. These were:

1. Current living situation
2. Planning for independent living
3. Friends, family and connections
4. School
5. Post-school
6. Living costs
7. Access to services, including their experience of Home Stretch
8. Background and identity
9. Parenting (where appropriate)

Young people in the trial were recruited via transition coaches. In total, nine young people participated in Wave 1 and four in Wave 2. There was attrition in the evaluation numbers as some young people were not consistently involved in the Trial for coaches to involve and others did not wish to be involved in the evaluation.

Practitioners

Practitioners involved with the Home Stretch trial were invited to participate in one-to-one interviews. Key Anglicare and DoC staff were recruited, as well as steering group members and practitioners in the leaving care sector. In total, 14 practitioners participated in interviews. Interviews covered questions aligned with the evaluation questions, including:

- How the expected outcomes for participants in the trial were being achieved
- Identified challenges to meeting the goals of the Trial,
- How might aspects of the Trial be replicated in other areas,

- What resources were required for extended care programs,
- How had the Trial engaged and met the needs of diverse young people. See [Appendix A](#) for practitioner interview schedule.

Foster Carers

Former foster carers were recruited for the evaluation who had or continued to provide housing and support to young people after the leaving care age of 18 (referred to in this report as foster carers). All foster carers interviewed had a Staying On agreement in place with the young person and were recruited to interviews via the Home Stretch co-ordinator. In total, five foster carers, representing four Staying on placements, participated in interviews. Foster carers had cared for young people between 13-17 years with an average of young people being 15.1 years.

Focus Groups

In total four focus groups were held for the evaluation. Two early insights focus groups were conducted with Anglicare and DoC policy and district staff, and two with Youth Advisory Group members. Focus group with practitioners were conducted to elicit early insights about the Trial. The two focus groups comprised of Anglicare staff, including Home Stretch co-ordinators and transition coaches, and DoC staff, including leaving care team leaders, case managers, policy officers, and district management. Participants were administered with a short demographic questionnaire, which included items about the length of time in the current role and formal qualifications. Groups then engaged in a recorded discussion guided by two Curtin facilitators. One additional early insights interview was conducted with a Home Stretch team member who stepped aside from the role due to ill-health. Data from the individual interview were amalgamated with the focus group data for analysis, however, demographic data for this participant is missing.

Figure 2: Early insights participant demographic information

Role	n	Time in role	n	Time in field	n	Highest qual	n	Gender	n
Home Stretch co-ordinator, lead	3	More than 1 year	7	More than 2 years	1	Bachelor degree	6	Female	7
Transition coach	3	More than 2 years	1	More than 4 years	1	Graduate certificate	1	Male	4
DoC management, leadership, policy	3	More than 4 years	1	6-10 years	2	Graduate diploma	1		
Child protection case manager, team leader	3	6-10 years	2	More than 10 years	7	Master degree	1		
						No response	2		

YAG members (n=6) were split into two focus groups which ran concurrently, with each group facilitated by one Curtin team member. A semi-structured interview schedule guided the

conversation which focused broadly on reflections of their YAG experience, ways in which the YAG contributed to the trial, and any changes they would make to the YAG.

Administrative Data

Administrative data collected by Trial staff was another data source used for the evaluation to understand the program's emerging logic and the needs of the young people participating in the Trial. Anglicare WA provided the research team with administrative data collected for the Trial. The administrative data consisted of information on the co-design process, including the reflective process around co-design, case reviews, on-boarding information and, with consent of the young people involved in the Trial, case notes.

The researchers reviewed and analysed the administrative data to gain an understanding of the methods of delivery, service responses, interagency working and use of resources, review documents and assessments used in the Trial and to understand the young people involved in the Trial and their priorities.

The administrative data was organised in such a way that there were Homestretch Trial Quarterly Reports created for each young person engaged with the Trial. Coaches enter information into a report template containing nine domains with text space at the end for a summative comment from coaches about their engagement with the young person over the quarter, as well as space for a 'change story' from the young person's perspective. In total, 51 reports for 13 young people were included in the data analysis. Reports were dated October 2019, January 2020, April 2020, and July 2020 for Reports 1-4, respectively. Coaches' comments were tabled using MS Excel, and sections missing information were noted. Where possible, missing information was supplemented by comments elsewhere in the domain. For example, one quarterly report was missing a comment within the Legal domain, however, details of the young person's legal situation were contained in the Current Status section. In this case, comment from the Current Status section were substituted in.

Analysis

Administrative data were thematically analysed using NVIVO software. In the first instance, comments were coded according to what was said in relation to each of the domains. For example, within the Living Situation domain, the comment may have indicated the young person was in safe and stable housing, having real estate issues, or experiencing unstable housing or homelessness (or a combination of these circumstances). As well as being coded by domain, we coded any information which indicated the young people's engagement with the Homestretch program, with the coach, and any information detailing how Homestretch provisions, such as the Invest in Me and Staying On subsidies, were used by the young person. Comments within this code, Homestretch engagement, were then analysed to identify the specific ways in which young people were using the Homestretch service. Findings from the administrative data have been reported in the findings section of this report.

Focus group and individual interview data were collated using NVivo software. Thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2014) was used to analyse the data. Evaluation questions were entered as nodes into which interview data could be added. Supplementary nodes were entered if they were not specifically relevant to an evaluation question but nevertheless were relevant to the context of the trial, leaving care system, or were otherwise pertinent to the aims of the evaluation. A sample of coding nodes and sub-nodes has been included in [Appendix E](#). Supplementary nodes were later subsumed within the evaluation questions. The following section presents the synthesis of findings from the analysis of qualitative interviews and administrative data.

Findings

The co-design or prototyping¹ processes that led to the development of the particular extended care model

Stakeholders were heavily involved throughout the trial. A Steering group, comprised of key stakeholders in leaving care, met regularly to oversee the trial's development and progress. Anglicare partnered with the Fremantle District Office to deliver Home Stretch to young people in the jurisdiction, before the trial was eventually expanded to the Rockingham District (this report presents findings from the evaluation of the Fremantle Trial). Yorganop was also a key partner in the development of Home Stretch's design principles and practice frameworks. The Home Stretch youth advisory group (YAG) comprised of young people with OOHC experience who were key stakeholders in the prototyping and decision-making processes. The need for more engagement with different stakeholder groups was highlighted by interviewees, such as with foster carers and disability providers.

The development of the Home Stretch model occurred in stages, starting with an initial co-design in 2018. The co-design involved a core group of 16 care-experience young people from WA and community stakeholders, including Anglicare WA, Department of Communities, Yorganop, Wanslea, Telethon Kids Institute, CREATE Foundation, Crossroads West, and Youth Advisory Council WA (YACWA), and other community organisations and peak bodies. The co-design process aimed to align system objectives with the goals of young people to develop a model for extending care. The co-designed model was intended for further development and testing in the prototyping process, in collaboration with stakeholders (see Watts et al., 2021 for further details).

Young people

Young people were involved in all aspects of the trial's development and implementation, including influencing the design principles and the work of transition coaches. Their participation was mainly through YAG meetings but also through individually participating in activities at various points in the trial. Young people were noted as the main stakeholders in the development of the trial, as one Home Stretch coach highlighted, the YAG had 'been instrumental in developing that young person's voice' in the model.

'It's important that young people get to have their say and that they're championed for what they've offered and their insights, because that's how we're going to develop a system that works for the person that we're actually trying to support.' – Transition coach

YAG meetings were held regularly at Anglicare, co-facilitated by CREATE and Anglicare. Information from meetings was documented and uploaded to a virtual workspace, so members were kept in the loop of YAG discussions. Discussion during YAGs could vary broadly depending on the focus of the session. YAG members described their involvement in scenarios to simulate how particular parts of the model might be delivered, drawing on their own perspectives and experiences. For example, one young person described simulating an Invest in Me funding meeting and as a group afterwards reflecting on how it might work depending on the individual circumstances of the young person:

¹ Prototyping was the term used by the Home Stretch team to describe the process of changing, testing and refining elements of the model.

'We've done a lot of like, how should we deliver the initially Home Stretch? Like, "Oh, this Home Stretch." We had some of us get up there and go, "Okay, so this is the case manager. This is the young person. This is the transition coach." And it's good to see that visual and then go, "Oh, hang on. I'm unsure if that's how we should approach it. I think we should have the case manager can have a little bit of bad rep, so the young person probably doesn't want them there. However, if they do, that's fine too.' – YAG Member

The YAG assisted in developing interview questions for hiring Home Stretch coaches and co-facilitated recruitment interviews. They also provided feedback on design principles, including the allocation of brokerage funding.

'So even the principals like, the invest in me, I remember sitting through that and us showing the application form we're using and getting feedback on, do you think this is fair? Is this the right writing? What should young people be entitled to? How much should they contribute and chip in and things like that? So I think because of the co-design aspect, there is a lot of reflection and seeking the feedback of young people, but also Yorganop as well.' – Transition coach

Apart from YAG meetings, individual young people were also engaged in discrete pieces of work, such as communicating information about Home Stretch to young people and deciding on future directions of the YAG.

'... outside of the YAG, we often bring in young people who are part of the YAG to do specific things. [They] have come in and done different pieces of the puzzle, you know they've either come in and done some work with us around how to communicate things to young people. Or, they've done some work with us on the interviews, or, you know, how do we position front of even the YAG, you know, redefining what the YAG might be now...' – Home Stretch senior co-ordinator

For more information on young people's involvement with the trial, see [What do Youth Advisory Group members hope to achieve through their participation?](#)

Department of Communities

Following the development of the model and the securing of funding for the trial from Department of Communities, Anglicare partnered with the Department of Communities Fremantle District Office to deliver the trial. Collaboration between the two was important, as the model would be delivered, in part, by the leaving care team which played a key role in referring and on-boarding young people. Home Stretch staff, including coaches and co-ordinators co-located at the District Office fortnightly, to assist with building inter-organisational relationships and on-boarding young people. Fremantle was chosen as the site of the trial due to its strong leaving care team, comprised of workers with a particular interest in leaving care who had opted to join the team, and this assisted in building the inter-organisational relationship.

'The department also has been really important in shaping [the trial] from a policy point of view, like policy and practice, because if you're going to design something that they ultimately are funding and going to be using, you need buy-in from them. Because if you don't, there's also no point. But it's also been good to see that they haven't shaped it so much that it's lost its meaning.' – Yorganop worker

Collaboration provided opportunities for Home Stretch staff and other organisations to learn about Departmental and leaving care processes, and to bring the goals and language of stakeholders into

alignment. One worker at the peak body for children in care commented, through their involvement with the trial, they had learnt more about how the Department works and the challenges around putting policies in place. Implementation and operations meetings between the Department and Anglicare were held regularly. Department staff, including policy and frontline staff, commented on different aspects of the model, including smooth transitions into Home Stretch, the allocation of brokerage funding, and Staying On agreements. Further into the trial, Home Stretch coaches and the leaving care team worked closely together with young people to facilitate smooth transitions.

This joint practice with case managers and Home Stretch coaches was aimed at providing young people with timely information about the Home Stretch offer and introducing them to a transition coach before leaving care, requiring collaborative practice between the services for warm referral. This was aided by Home Stretch staff being periodically co-located at the District Office. One Home Stretch worker noted *'those on the ground workers [in the leaving care team]... have both been really proactive in trying to make it work and shape those transitions.'* (For more details, see [Smooth Transitions](#)).

Though the partnership was not without challenges, it brought about opportunities for adaption and learning for all staff. Some workers reflected there had initially been a gap in understandings of how the other organisation operates, as Communities worker commented in the beginning there was a feeling of 'us and them' and Home Stretch staff had *'views of the department [which] were quite negative and thought that all the kids hated their case managers'*. A Home Stretch coach reflected working with any new organisation could bring learning opportunities, and working with the Department had been *'really beneficial... looking at things through a legislative lens'*. Another Home Stretch coach noted the challenges early on in the partnership were improved by the process of collaboration and ongoing learning.

'Building that relationship in the beginning was really challenging... Some [case workers] have known the young people since they were little babies... It's understandable that they've got some kind of protection of these young people. So, to hand them over, so to speak... I can understand the challenge for them was just as great.' – Transition coach

Yorganop

Yorganop was also a key partner in the trial, influencing the development of the model, its design principles and practice frameworks. This was significant as the first partnership the organisation has made with another service*, with one Home Stretch worker highlighting *'they partnered with us is because we didn't go in there asking them to do something for us, we went in there asking them what would they like to do together about this problem?'* Cultural security was identified as a necessity for every aspect of the trial. Through the partnership with Yorganop, Anglicare sought to develop culturally safe policy and practice. Yorganop's involvement was important for trust-building with the community and acted as a bridge between Home Stretch and Aboriginal young people, as a Yorganop worker noted *'a lot of our kids just don't engage unless they know who you are'*. This partnership influenced the language of the Home Stretch design principles, though a Yorganop worker acknowledged wording of Home Stretch information for young people would need to change depending on the community for which it was intended: *'a lot of the wording would need to change for Aboriginal people in community because it's not how they speak and it would have different meanings'*. An outcome of the collaboration on Home Stretch was the reworking of the Support Circles design principle, from a being a separate part of the model to being an overarching principle to be considered in all aspects of Home Stretch's work with young people.

'We've showed [Yorganop] all our principals and saying, "How would that relate to Aboriginal young people? And if it doesn't and how can we change it?" Whether that's the language or the format or how we do things and how we view family.' – Transition coach

Yorganop carers were engaged to provide feedback on the model, how it works for Aboriginal young people and Aboriginal families. Practitioners stressed the importance Yorganop's role in the trial, as a Communities worker reflected, if Home Stretch could *'get this right for Aboriginal young people, we get it right for everyone'* and having a culturally secure model would mean all young people could feel safe and secure within the service.

Yorganop strongly influenced the work of transition coaches, through the involvement of Elders working at Yorganop, upskilling transition coaches, and sharing about Aboriginal ways of being and working. This included learning about collectivist culture, investment in the whole community around the young person, and working on adaptable and appropriate timeframes for Aboriginal young people. One transition coach reflected on working alongside Yorganop: *'I really enjoyed seeing from a cultural lens how to work with Aboriginal young people... [for Aboriginal people] there's nothing quite like being sort of represented by your own culture.'* Knowledge and training offered by Elders extended beyond culturally secure practice, to local and family-specific information helping to connect young people to their families and land.

'[Elder at Yorganop is] the main woman there. And she'll sit down with some of the young people that we work with and do like their family history and all that sort of stuff, and where their mum's from and where their dad's from, because sometimes the young people we work with don't have any of that information.' – Transition coach

Additional stakeholders

Additional stakeholder groups were identified as having limited or no involvement in the co-design, implementation and implementation process. These included foster carers, the disability sector, and parents of young people in care. Though the Foster Carers Association were involved with the co-design, they had limited on-going involvement in the trial until much later. As one Home Stretch worker pointed out, the trial intended young people to be front and centre of any decisions about the model. Foster carers were interviewed later in 2020 about after care arrangements, to review on how Staying On agreements were working, their learning and reflections: *'so we've been trying to capture the voices of those who are actually extending care as one of the key ways to bring their voice into it'*. However, foster carers were not represented on the Steering Group. As the initial eligibility criteria for the trial excluding young people accessing NDIS support, another group which was not represented in the development and implementation of Home Stretch was the disability sector. However, later it was considered this could be an important group to include due to the intersections between disability and leaving care systems. Parents of young people in care were also not represented as stakeholders in the trial. Though not wanting to detract from the voice and experiences of young people, one Yorganop worker highlighted the input of parents was important in the model, as young people would eventually need to have experiences of their parents in order to make informed decisions about contact with them after leaving care.

'Kids need to have an experience of their parents, safe or unsafe, so that when they're old enough and they're allowed to make their own decisions, they know who those safe and unsafe people are and they have more ability to make informed decisions about that. So I think to have parents' involvement on the co-design, on some level it's just an added input that's needed' – Yorganop worker

What are the specific ways in which the Trial provides an after care response which may not otherwise be available to young people exiting out of home care, and how are the anticipated outcomes for participants' in the Trial being achieved?

At the time of the Evaluation, Homestretch's after care response consisted of three core elements: the Safety net fund, Transitional support in the form of one-to-one transition coaching, and Support circles. These components were highly interlinked, for example, safety net funding was accessible through a transition coach and for transitional support. The model evolved over time to expand the specific prototypes within the three core elements (see [Figure 1](#) for prototypes overview).

Safety Net Fund

The Safety Net fund consists of different types of funding available to young people to support their living arrangement, aspirational goals and emergency needs. The funding can be used to support a young person's living situation, through contributing to rent, payment of a foster carer subsidy and/or costs associated with the household. Invest in Me funding is used for a variety of goals and needs, and clear practice guidelines developed for its administration, again through workshopping with stakeholders.

Staying On

Staying On is an agreement set up between a young person and carers, negotiated by them in a process facilitated by the Home Stretch co-ordinator. This usually involved a current foster carers, however, in one case, an agreement was set up between a young person and their biological mother, in another, a young person returned to a previous foster carer they had lived with at 16 and a Staying On agreement was established. The agreement includes details of the young person's contribution to the household, financial and otherwise, and the expectations of both carers and young people. While for some the agreement 'just put on paper what was already happening', others found it was an opportunity to voice their expectations and come to an agreement about how carers were going to continue to support the young person towards their goals, and how the young person would contribute in a way that built their capacity.

'Each one of them is different anyhow for the foster carers as well. Some of them have an idea of what they want to see from the young person. And some of them... don't... One we did recently was a young person who's returning to a previous carer, someone who he was in care with before he turned 18, which is really nice to see. That he's able to then go back to them and to support that.' - Transition coach

Payment of a carer subsidy is also available through Stay One. The amount is negotiated on a case-by-case basis and the payment is designed to reduce over time, so carers will not experience the sudden cut-off in support, as is normative when young people age out of care. However, one carer noted the process of negotiating the payment amount was 'a little bit awkward' as they would rather have had a set amount at first which then goes down year by year as the young person increases their contribution. Payment of a foster carer subsidy was noted as a point of difference between Home Stretch and other leaving carer services. One leaving care worker highlighted transitional services were also able to support reaching goals in terms of supporting education, health and other needs, but the ability to support housing through extending placements and

implementing Staying On agreements was a crucial difference with Home Stretch which *'takes a lot of pressure off a lot of young people'*.

'I'm on full age pension. So of course, it's been incredibly helpful to have the grant. I'd always felt with the children, that it was a bit ironic that they turn 18 and the grant stops from DCP. I thought, whoa, they just hit a really expensive phase of their life and there's no grant' - Foster carer

Foster carers had welcomed the continuation of support, with some noting it would have been very hard for them otherwise, they had been worried about losing the additional \$500 per fortnight straight away, and it had been *'incredibly helpful to have the grant'*. We interviewed carers of four young people in the trial who had been in their care for an average of 15.1 years. While the subsidy was invariably beneficial to them, all stated they would have continued to support the young person with or without Home Stretch's involvement.

Rent Subsidies

For young people who were in an alternative living arrangement accommodation subsidies were also available. These covered a range of housing types, including renting a room in a share house, short-term emergency accommodation, and student accommodation. Again, it was noted other services were not able to offer a housing subsidy in the same way, which could accommodate various living arrangement types. It was intended to be administered in a way which increased capacity and simulated a more mainstream living experience for young people that may not have the same access to personal resources as their peers, for example, when parents might contribute to a shortfall in rent if a young person loses work. For one young parent with a child in their care who had previously been homeless, the rent subsidy was used to pay for emergency accommodation in a motel for two to three months while they sought longer term accommodation with the help of their transition coach.

Invest In Me

Invest In Me funding is brokerage funding allocated for each young person in the Trial. At the beginning of the Trial, there were no established principles governing how the funding could be spent; *'it was all kind of inconsistent'*. However, as it went on practice guidelines were developed for how funding should be utilised.

'That short-term alleviation of crisis sometimes... and being able to make a decision quickly, it makes so much difference. Huge. I've never worked somewhere with access to funding quite [as] quickly... Coaches are able to make decisions up to a hundred dollars and then anything over it goes to the team. Which I think is great. Again, you get some really good feedback. You get creative solutions.' - Transition coach

A clear aim of Invest in Me funding was to build young people's capacity to advocate for themselves, manage their income, and to teach independent living skills. One Home Stretch coach reported they were trying to get young people to think about how they might make a proposal for what they need, to services and others, by showing they had thought about alternative options, or how they might contribute to costs.

'We've seen young people contribute to paying for things in which normally they might just expect the department to pay for. So giving them a bit of ownership around that, which is part of the thing about teaching them to be independent and making their own way.' – Transition coach

Young people were encouraged to 'chip in' for purchases, either through contributing financially or by undertaking planning. However, one Yorganop worker highlighted that for '*people have different starting points*' and particularly Aboriginal young people, there could be issues with chipping in; it '*needs to be equitable, not equal*'.

Use of Invest In Me funding was wide ranging, and included payment of education and training fees (e.g. TAFE), enabling transport (driving lessons, getting a driver's licence, replacing smart rider, transferring vehicle registration), health costs (ambulance, dentist), emergency relief, and payment of fines and debts, which for some young people '*got rid of a lot of stress*'. Financial support was also enabled by helping young people to access financial advice or other funding, such as TILA.

Transition support

Home Stretch coaches can be seen as a conduit between the Home Stretch model and the young person, and as such, play a critical role in presenting and delivering on the promises of Home Stretch. Coaches had extensive experience in related areas and brought varied skillsets to their work with young people in the Trial. They often employed a highly individualised approach to their work, role modelling relationships and skills, promoting self-determination in a range of ways, and building capacity to soften the transition from OOHC and from the utilisation of support services generally. They often engaged in relational work with young people, carers, parents and wider kinship networks. The naming of the coach role was identified as important in differentiating the overall focus of the role, as one coach outlined: '[case managers are] very much, their whole ethos is around child protection. Whereas, we're about child empowerment or young person empowerment. So, there is a real difference of learning in those two different titles.'

Coach skills

Coaches highlighted the focus of the work was on the young person; to build trust, learn about the barriers and difficulties they faced, as well as their unique strengths which could be utilised to address these challenges. They acknowledged young people have very different starting points and life experiences which need to be factored in when supporting them, and that to expect all young people to feel fully equipped to live without support of leaving care services by 21 was unrealistic. Both Home Stretch staff and foster carers highlighted the importance of building trust as a foundation for the work of coaches, but this could take some time.

'... with some young people [building trust] takes a year at least... But for those young people, their health and wellbeing and their mental health maybe is a huge contributor to the circumstances that they're facing... So, to take a year of that just building trust to get them into potentially talking to someone or accessing resources to help them with those things.' – Transition coach

Home Stretch coaches applied a youth work lens with a focus on self-determination, empowerment and capacity building for young people. One YAG member noted '*they're youthful*' and '*they just wear their normal clothes... but my [other leaving care] worker has her badge, [leaving care service] on there... and it's embarrassing. It's really embarrassing.*' A foster carer commented coaches model healthy relationships, provide guidance and are often an adult to turn to outside the family that will be '*someone in your corner*'. This required time spent with the young person beyond that needed to complete forms, make referrals, or progress towards a particular goal. That is, time was required to meet young people where they were at, get to know them, and have them feel comfortable.

'My caseworker doesn't actually know anything about me... she never actually sat down and spoke to me one-on-one personal. [My coach] on the other hand, well, he knows everything actually about me. It's not a secret.' – Young person

'We're not a shiny shoe career...Like, we're cleaning out young people's homes and stuff when they need to move. And you know? Like, I've worked with homeless young people. And you're on the street and you're talking with people and sitting down with them on the concrete.' – Transition coach

In many cases, the relationship with the young person was built over some months as coaches would contact them without the obligation for young people to respond. One coach's quarterly report comment described the need for a 'persistent and reliable approach' that would not be intrusive for the young person, as well as 'the importance of assertive follow up' in order to better engage young people with significant support needs.

There were *extra* activities undertaken by coaches, such as remembering birthday, being a non-judgemental listener about the young peoples' relationships, living situations, and other important aspects of their lives. This enhanced the relationships between coaches and young people. 'I feel really supported and safe' one young person noted, and another relayed the coach being 'good for yarns'.

Support circles

Support circles was an aspect of the Home Stretch model intended to build interdependence in young people and support them to identify a range of people they could turn to for support outside of Home Stretch. Coaches could be a platform for developing social skills and support young people 'to build those networks and supports around them'.

'What do the non-care leavers do? They join clubs. They join meetup groups. They do sport like hanging out with their colleagues. And work is a really good way to make connections or study. I think these pathways are the ones we want to get young people in.' – Home Stretch worker

Working closely with family, carers and Elders was an important part of building young people's networks. This could involve eco-mapping with young people, which one Home Stretch worker commented needs to happen in the early stages of working with them to provide a holistic picture of a young person's family context and history, while also helping to make visible the coach's place in the person's life and their role in the young person's journey. This early engagement with family and supports was identified as particularly important for working with Aboriginal young people. One coach discussed how working with strong adults in the young person's life, like mothers and nannas, was important to gain approval to work with the young person and to make sure they are well connected to supportive people around them.

'We're not just looking at just an individual, but a wider group. Because, in some sense, within the Aboriginal families we work with... We're focused on the needs of the young person and what they want. But, I think there also has to be buy-in from those around them, because there is a cultural expectation that you are part of a wider group, and a wider community.' – Transition coach

Practical support

Support from transition coaches could be broadly categorised into social and emotional support, and practical support. Coaches bridged gaps between services for young people, referring them on but also continuing to support them in accessing other services. Coaches could provide lifts to and from appointments, accompany young people as an advocate, take an unofficial mentor role, or simply be someone to talk to. The wide range of activities undertaken by coaches offered support to young people in sometimes unexpected ways, some of which could be seen as stepping in for the role of family or close friends. This included remembering birthdays of young people, being someone to call or text 'when things get tough', and the having a 'light-touch' approach, wherein coaches would keep contact with no obligation for response or engagement from young people; 'it's not me always having to call in; Home Stretch will contact me'.

Coaches undertook a range of tasks to support young people towards personal, educational, employment, and financial goals. This included building capacity around independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning, managing finances, and navigating systems such as MyGov and eCourts. Coaches supported young people to explore their educational options, for example, taking a tour of a prospective TAFE campus or attending a TAFE interview with them, and engaged with them in planning for educational and non-traditional pathways, such as one young person who was pursuing their artistic interests. Coaches assisted young people to get a drivers licence, including getting their learner plates and accompanying them in the car for their logbook hours. Other practical support included getting a tax file number, and querying and applying for Centrelink payments.

For young parents, coaches supported them to maintain a child-safe environment in the home, maintain their tenancy, and provide education about children's developmental needs. One Home Stretch coach stressed working with young parents could be time and resource intensive. Two workers had been allocated to the particular young parent who was at risk of homelessness and who had child protection involvement. Despite the pressures they faced, the young person had been instrumental in searching accommodation options for themselves and their child. In terms of housing support, coaches assisted young people to find and maintain housing, for example, sourcing short-term, crisis accommodation, and helping to maintain a supported housing tenancy.

Coaches linked young people in to other services, such as mental health and counsellors, education and training, housing services, social enterprises (offering work opportunities and skills training which may lead to employment), and NDIS. One identified strength of Anglicare being a larger organisation was Home Stretch staff were able to make referrals internally to other Anglicare services, for example, family services and counsellors.

Although the primary role of the coach was to support the young person, relational work with family, carers and kinship network members was a key to doing so. Often for foster carers, coaches were seen as an extra pair of hands to support young people to step in when they would usually need to, for example, accessing Centrelink or cancelling a gym membership. They were another adult or parental figure in the young person's life they could turn to for whatever they might need. A foster carer reflected sometimes suggestions from family could 'fall flat' so having support from the coach to float ideas was beneficial to the young person taking them on board: 'it's good to have someone outside the family who doesn't have that kind of weight.'

Working with diverse young people

A key focus for many practitioners we interviewed was how the trial was meeting the needs of diverse groups of care leavers. They were concerned with what steps Home Stretch had taken to address their needs, and what still needed to be put in place. This was discussed primarily in terms of including and supporting Aboriginal young people in the Trial (see *How have stakeholders have shaped the trial: Yorganop* for more detail), as well as young people with disability, young parents, and young people exiting group homes.

Home Stretch coaches addressed the needs of young person on a case-by-case basis, *'asking them what they want'*, utilising reflective practice, and having non-judgemental and non-biased work practices. Practitioners from Home Stretch and the peak body for children in care noted a focus on individualised practice and responses: *'young people that are leaving care have come from all different backgrounds and had all different experiences... so I think the individualised nature of it is really important'*. Despite this individualised focus, there were limited examples of an overarching framework to address diverse needs systematically through the Home Stretch program, for example, prioritising employing diverse staff, as one foster carer noted Home Stretch staff should reflect the ethnic and cultural mix of the people they work with – *'... because of acceptance. You want acceptance of the program'*.

When working with Aboriginal young people, coaches noted understanding Aboriginal ways of working was a primary consideration. This included gaining the trust and respect of family and Elders before meeting and working with the young person, and working at the young person's pace, on their timeframe *'to make them feel accepted and heard and comfortable'*. A Yorganop worker highlighted the importance of workers respecting what Aboriginal young people might see as success, and supporting them towards those goals, for example, if that is caring for siblings or having a family of their own. This involves asking what they see as success, what is important to them, and how Home Stretch could best support them towards it.

Multiple leaving care workers highlighted the importance of working with care leavers with high and complex support needs, including complex mental health and cognitive disability, but some shared concerns about Home Stretch's limited engagement them. One leaving care worker reflected the scope of the trial may have been intentionally limited to bolster short-term outcomes for the trial and secure funding for its rollout, and if Home Stretch were to be implemented state-wide *'they will need to be working with young people with disabilities and the complex young people'*. They highlighted a case where a young person over 18 with high support needs had interactions with multiple systems, such as Justice and Health, and were continuing to be supported by their case worker, who had limited capacity to do so. They stressed Home Stretch would need to have the ability to work with such complexity in order to be a viable option for many care leavers, not only the *'ideal candidate'*.

'[From 18 to 21] it's make or break, really. Because they can end up in the adult justice system for years... maybe they get the supports they need and have regular NDIS support through ... and maybe they walk a different path. [Home Stretch] need to be able to take on those... they'll have to support all young people... from all backgrounds' – Case manager

A Home Stretch worker acknowledged young people on the NDIS were originally excluded from the eligibility criteria, however, they later accepted young people into the trial who were also accessing NDIS. They noted:

'I think the other stakeholder that probably hasn't been prioritized has been the disability services and that system of care for young people living with disabilities or being diagnosed and transitioning... we originally excluded young people on the NDIS from the trial. It was just so apparent from our work with [Fremantle District] that we need to see what happens with at least one or two young people, because this is where the offer might actually be really useful.' – Home Stretch worker

One foster family caring for a young person with high support needs highlighted a strong relationship with their Department case manager who had helped them through beginning to navigate NDIS systems and seek treatment for the young person's recent diagnosis. Though the case manager continued to be heavily involved with the young person, the family also noted Home Stretch had been beneficial for them in terms of the Staying On subsidy and the coach had been someone outside the family for the young person to talk to. The coach highlighted challenges with the NDIS application process, including a lack of support coordination and important details which had been omitted from the plan, noting they themselves were learning throughout the process. A key part of their work with the young person was outlined as supporting the family through navigating the NDIS system.

Home Stretch coaches working with young parents in the trial highlighted the additional considerations and support needs – *'it's a whole different way of working'*. Of the four young people with children in the trial, one coach noted many challenges to working with young parents.

'It's hard to expect them to have well developed parenting skills when they're still a young adult themselves. They need their own parenting, re-parenting, and then the children need parenting. So it's like having two clients that you're working with' – Transition coach

In one case, workers acted as a conduit between the young parent and other services, to enable access. For example, a young parent who was at high risk of homelessness and staying in short-term, crisis accommodation funded by Home Stretch was referred to a supported housing service. They were accepted to the service on the basis they were engaged with another support service (Home Stretch) during their tenancy. For the same young person, child protection were notified of safety concerns for the child of the young parent. Though this impacted their relationship with the coach, the young person was willing to continue engagement with the coach and have additional support for parenting.

Supporting the child was a central focus of the coaches' work with young parents, to increase parenting skills, link them to other services, and provide a child-safe environment. This often required more time for each visit: *'[it takes] a good half a day, if not a whole day, just on trying to get a few things sorted'*. A Home Stretch worker noted they had started to allocate two workers to each young parent in recognition there were two clients, at times with competing needs, requiring a higher workload. There were also additional material costs to consider.

'[They] just moved into a new house and they didn't have basic things. There was no kettle, there was no toaster, no cutlery drawer, not enough cutlery, there was no breakfast bowls, there was no inside clothes driers, so the clothesline was outside and all the clothes would get wet. So I took them shopping on Monday or Tuesday this week, and we had a hundred dollar budget and said, "Okay, here's the things you need." So we went out shopping, six different shops to try and find all of those things that would be able to help them.' – Transition coach

Challenges

There were a number of challenges to the process of piloting the Home Stretch model. These can be seen at an organisational, systems, and practice levels. These included building inter-organisational relationships and partnerships, information sharing, staff knowledge of systems, staff turnover, and engaging diverse young people in the trial. COVID-19 impacted the trial indirectly through housing shortages, exacerbating insecure work and fluctuating income support. While Home Stretch practice was also impacted at times, it led staff to be adaptive and find creative solutions.

Inter-organisational collaboration

Bidirectional communication between the Communities and Home Stretch was seen as crucial to the safety of young people and continuity of support. Department staff had limited feedback from Home Stretch about young people they had referred into the program, though they acknowledged this was in part due to maintaining young people's confidentiality; *'we're just trusting it's all going okay'*. At the time of the interviews, Home Stretch was developing a process to update the Department about who had been signed up to the Trial, who had aged out, and where they were at with each part of the model.

Communities also kept valuable and extensive information about young people's care history and intergenerational records of child protection involvement which was often not accessible to Home Stretch workers. This included in some cases many years-worth of information which could be used to gain a full picture of the young person's history and context. One leaving care worker cautioned that coaches need to be aware of young people's experiences of trauma and have detailed information on their history, so they can recognise and address *'different types of trauma and triggers'* when they arise.

Closing the feedback loop with the Department upon young people's exit from Home Stretch was also flagged as a concern, as the progress made between 18-21 would need to be documented and stored should young people require Departmental support post-21. For one young person who exited Home Stretch at 21, a key information summary was provided to the Department to guide next steps in supporting them. One leaving care worker noted *'it's good to get their feedback because it's not about knowing everything that's going on, but it's more around knowing enough... if they come back to us, how we help the young person without asking a hundred questions?'* Development of practice guidelines and protocols for information sharing will be needed for effective scaling of Home Stretch.

Given Home Stretch was trialled in an existing leaving care services landscape, some participants noted the importance of outlining boundaries between services and having clear responsibilities for each. One leaving care service co-ordinator highlighted MOUs between leaving care services were commonplace and suggested these could be negotiated by Home Stretch to ensure clarity of responsibility for leaving care service provision and so young people could transition to another leaving care service at 21 if needed.

Some participants discussed the complexities of Home Stretch' and another leaving care service's joint work with young people in the Trial. This could be beneficial at times, as the increased support could shorten the length of time young people spent in crisis. However, it was also identified as a barrier to working consistently and building capacity with young people.

'So, "If I can't get it from Home Stretch, I'll go back to the [leaving care service]... And they're just looking to get their needs met. But you couldn't really follow through with anything because if they just stopped talking about it, it's probably because the other service had bought it for them or done something for them.' – Transition coach

One Home Stretch coach reported that, following a period of joint work with young people at the beginning for the Trial, Home Stretch stipulated young people in the Trial would be engaged with one leaving care service at a time, noting shared care had not ultimately been beneficial to the young people.

Staffing and turnover

The Home Stretch coaches brought expertise to the role from areas such as child protection, youth work, and drug and alcohol. This was important for the team to be able to navigating complex systems including child protection and leaving care, while also bringing challenges if coaches did not have an understanding of leaving care processes. For example, one Home Stretch worker noted *'coaches really need to have an understanding of the existing system'* and need to work closely with other services, e.g. Yorganop, who may have important contextual information relevant for working effectively with a particular young person. However, they added this information seeking was, at times, not happening. On the other hand, when processes were in place for coaches to first liaise with workers at other services, this could extend the time taken to first engage young people.

Similarly to other services, one Home Stretch worker noted crisis work with young people could often disrupt coaches meeting regularly with other young people they work with. At the time of the interview, plans for a duty system had been discussed where a dedicated crisis worker could respond to young people's urgent needs outside of their regular work with their coach, to ease time pressures on coaches.

During the course of the evaluation there was staff turnover, however, due to the timeframe of the evaluation and the low retention rate for second interviews with young people there was limited data on the impact of this on outcomes for young people. One Home Stretch worker noted the team were considering having every young person in the trial meet at least two coaches, so they would have another contact to approach within the team, however, this had not yet been implemented. One young person commented when their original coach left the program, no handover process had taken place and they received a text message to say the coach had moved on.

COVID-19

The pandemic had impacts on the trial, both directly and indirectly. Initial challenges related to engaging young people during lockdowns and building relationships. Quarterly reports and comments from Home Stretch workers noted having meetings online created additional barriers for young people. Likewise, building rapport with some young people was interrupted due to lockdown restrictions.

'...that was super challenging, because you've got young people that have complex mental health or trust issues, or maybe don't have a stable place to live. And you're trying to find accommodation for them without being able to just go and pick them up. And building trust with a young person sometimes is just that, being able to go and pick them up from a place they don't feel safe, you know?' – Transition coach

To adapt to restrictions, one coach developed online versions of forms, which they continued to use past lockdown. They also noted the restrictions helped to connect them with other services in the young people's lives, as workers were more willing to call each other rather than wait for in-person meeting times, increasing connectivity between them. Indirect impacts of the pandemic included house availability and the shortage of youth accommodation.

What were the reasons for young people agreeing to participate in the Trial?

Enablers of participation

Information was identified as a primary enabler for young people's engagement with Home Stretch. This was in terms of young people having ample information about the program and enough time to process it. Moreover, leaving care teams and foster carers would also need ample information about Home Stretch to support young people's engagement. The information young people would need prior to being on-boarded included the structure of Home Stretch and how it is separate from the Department, the financial support offered by Home Stretch, what would be required of them, and alternatives to Home Stretch. Anglicare created informational videos with transition coaches to help introduce young people to the offer of Home Stretch before meeting a coach. Other videos were also trialled which were in the format of personal interviews with coaches, *'just to give that bit of a softer approach, and a softer introduction to what Home Stretch is'*.

'The young people seem to like them, the feedback was quite good...sometimes for them to be able to look at a video and go, "Oh, that's what they're talking about. I'd like to know more." Can be a good thing.' – Transition coach

Informing foster carers about Home Stretch was a key enabler for setting up Staying On agreements. Foster carers reflected their initial understandings of the trial were that it was extending foster carer placements, helping to keep young people *'in a supportive home environment'*, and a mentor would be working with the young person. One foster carer noted they would have liked more information about what was required of them: *'... a little more [information] around what my role would be, or if I had a role other than what I've always had, but was anything else going to be expected of me this year under this new project?'*

Smooth Transitions

Smooth Transitions was the term used by Home Stretch to describe an extended, warm referral period before leaving care, where young people could receive information about Home Stretch and be introduced to a transition coach by the leaving care team. This was noted by both leaving care workers and transition coaches to be an important time of relationship and trust building with young people. One foster carer reflected on Home Stretch's early engagement with the young person before they turned 18: *'It just felt like it flowed because [the transition coach] came to the final family case meeting'*.

'That handover was really great in terms of, she met [the coach] about three or four times and that was great. I think handovers are really important and building that relationship, and doing it in a timely manner with enough time for the young person, for it to sink in what's going on.' – Case manager

Many workers noted longer transitional periods were ideal, and although Home Stretch's engagement with young people took place six months before leaving care, more time would be beneficial. Strong and trusting relationships between young people and their case manager were also identified as a facilitator of smooth transitions.

'I'd say a year would be nicer... So if [the young people] do trust us and they see [transition coaches] with us, sometimes for a 17-year-old, "If my case worker sort of is backing this person in, well, then maybe I can start sort of sharing," and then we can start pulling back. That worked well with a couple young people.' – Case manager

Interestingly, in some instances where young people had strong relationships with case managers they could be hesitant to move into Home Stretch – *'They feel safe with their worker. So it takes a bit of time to transition some relationships of course'*. This reinforced the necessity of extended handover periods, but also brought about the idea of having an option for young people to choose their Home Stretch provider. If young people did not have contact with the Department this was a barrier to engagement with Home Stretch. There were challenges to engaging young people who had left residential care before 18, those who lived in unendorsed placements, or who had been homeless due to difficulties contacting them, but also if they perceived Home Stretch as a continuation of the care system or Department.

'If the young person doesn't have any engagement with the department, you can't necessarily reach them to offer them Home Stretch. And if they can't find them to offer them, then they're not going to... It's a big barrier to being involved.' (Dept policy worker)

Yorganop at times bridged this relational gap with young people when they were not involved with case managers. Yorganop workers and carers at times were in contact with young people when their case manager had not seen them in a long time, and referral has taken place with the Yorganop worker. Moreover, a Yorganop worker highlighted Aboriginal young people should ideally be introduced to Home Stretch at a younger age, *'it's really important to start thinking and planning for this type of thing much younger for our kids'* to accommodate significant differences in behaviour, engagement and risk for at younger ages.

Opt in, opt out

The design of the model allowed for young people to opt in or out depending on their circumstances and level of need at a given time; this was identified as a feature unique to Home Stretch. The option to opt in or out acknowledged young people may need support at various points in time after 18 and not necessarily immediately after leaving care. After being on-boarded to Home Stretch and meeting a transition coach, coaches made regular contact with young people, with no obligation for response by the young person. However, if young people opted out, regular contact from transition coaches would cease until they opted in again. One young person, who had opted out of the trial then opted back in, indicating they had been more interested in pursuing other activities – *'going out'* – at the time of opting out but had since formulated *'future plans'* which they wanted to work towards with their coach.

Some reasons for young people's limited engagement or disengagement in the trial were becoming homeless, not being contactable by phone or messenger, and simply *'not [being] in the right headspace'*. Some coaches experienced last-minute cancellations or non-attendance for meetings with young people. In one case, the young person was engaged only on set court dates but did not take up support at the times in between. Several quarterly report comments from both young people and coaches indicated young people's self-sufficiency and reluctance to seek help as a barrier to engaging with coaches or responding to communication. One coach, after some months of limited communication, was told by the young person that excessive work demands and the limited availability of the coach, i.e. only during work hours, had been a barrier to their engagement. As a result, the coach changed their availability to include some after-hours times during the week.

Are there differences in young people's lives following participation in the Trial?

Due to data collection limitations, the evaluation was able to capture baseline data from nine young people participating in the trial, and longitudinal data for four young people. However, differences made for young people in the trial were also gleaned through administrative data and interviews with practitioners and young people in the YAG.

For some young people in the trial, their participation had meant the alleviation of homelessness. Quick access to brokerage funding and the flexibility of housing subsidies meant Home Stretch could be responsive to young people in crisis, and once housed, were able to work with them on plans for accommodation. One young person shared *'I was on the street and [transition coach] got me off the street. So I think that's good because you ring up the department, they can't do anything'*. For another young parent, the trial assisted them to access crisis accommodation before securing a short-term tenancy in supported accommodation.

'So they'd been homeless for over 12 months, which is just the most amazing thing and to get them a house, and for them to say, "I finally have an address. You don't understand how big this is for me to have an address." And that really hit me because it's the things that we take for granted.' – Transition coach

In other cases, benefits of involvement with the trial were more subtle. This included young people being able to build a relationship with their transition coach and being better able to make decisions about their lives, with the help of role modelling from coaches.

'I think she seems more able to discuss things in a mature manner. I think it's been helpful to have the supportive adult... So she's been able to weigh and judge a bit more maturely. Of course, she is growing up too, but I think it's really helped that she's had other adults to talk with in that way.' – Foster carer

Foster carers were, overall, positive about the support which had been offered to their families by Home Stretch. For them, the practical support of the transition coach as another adult supporting the young person, an *'extra set of hands'* and as a role model was noted benefit of their involvement with the trial – *'it's helped us enormously'*. Moreover, the Staying On subsidy helped to ease the financial pressure of having carer payments cease immediately after the young person left care.

What aspects of the Trial could be replicated in other localities and what aspects are likely to be varied according to local conditions?

Smart and effective scale up of projects and programs has been shown to work best with modular designs, fast roll out with a network loop for taking up feedback from learnings at each site and rapid incorporation of problem-solving shared across the network (Flyvbjerg, 2021). Key to our consideration of this question has been to see any replication of the Home Stretch model in the context of existing practice architecture (Kemmis, 2019) for supporting young people leaving care in Western Australia. We consider that the efforts of the codesign team, the Home Stretch Trial and the steering group have built on, and extended, existing practices, created new ways of speaking about extended care for young people and have created a model that can be scaled to other locations. The key to scale up is to ensure that the modular design of the Home Stretch model is what is incorporated into future locations and co-design processes utilised to build relationships amongst District offices and Home Stretch service providers with a view to creating further understandings of how it will work in specific place-based locations. Co-design should be utilised to facilitate readiness for the program in different localities rather than redesigning the Home Stretch model *per se*. The modular components of Home Stretch are: Invest in Me funding, Staying On

agreements and subsidies, Housing Subsidies, and coach style transitional support with the option to opt in or out.

Based on the research by Flyvbjerg (2021) and this evaluation of the Home Stretch trial there are aspects of the existing practice architecture (Kemmis, 2019) that will need further developing to ensure an effective scale up for Home Stretch programs in different locations. We recommend ways to build an effective network to support the scale-up across and between locations both within the Department of Communities and across the service delivery system. This would enable rapid dissemination of learnings from locations and should facilitate a broader system change with regard to extending care for young people leaving the care system.

This evaluation question has been answered in terms of the considerations and requirements for the scale-up of the Home Stretch model. See section below on recommendations for details.

What do Youth Advisory Group members hope to achieve through their participation?

YAG members were motivated by a desire to enact social change in the leaving care system and to advocate for other young people in care by using their own experiences and perspectives. One young person noted, they joined the YAG to *'advocate for other people and to change the system because I feel like the systems need to be fixed for everybody's benefit.'* One identified strength of the YAG was the diversity of its members who offered their perspectives to the design of the model.

'We've tried obviously to really prioritise the involvement of a diverse group, young people in the YAG. So young people... living with disabilities... Aboriginal young parents. I think that representation in that group, I think that's helped a little bit, certainly with offering us multiple perspectives.' – Home Stretch worker

One YAG member commented on their sessions with Yorganop, which they had found very interesting, where they had discussed the changing issues facing Aboriginal young people, how Home Stretch could best meet their needs and provide extra support: *'I'm contributing to Home Stretch. And just shaping that from an Aboriginal person's perspective in terms of Black culture, and the cultural dynamics of everything from family, friends, housing, everything.'* However, they also stressed they wanted the whole YAG to have opportunities to interact with Yorganop, learn about Aboriginal culture, and the impact of OOHC and leaving care on Aboriginal young people: *'especially in foster care system because we've got 56% Aboriginal kids. Now this is something I think as a young adult, we should all learn together'*.

The overall experience of the YAG was positive and members noted many benefits to their participation. The physical environment of YAG meetings was inviting, with snacks, tea and coffee provided. YAG members noted feeling at ease and being able to ask the facilitators anything without judgement. One YAG member noted meetings were scaffolded, to discuss an idea broadly, in simple terms to be more understandable before launching into asking direct questions.

'They do really good at building it up. They started off simple, so it's more understandable. Then by the end of the session, they're talking about almost just one question that they've been building up to, but by the end of it you understand it. As if they were to just ask you that question at the start, without doing everything before, you wouldn't have been able to understand it.' – Young person

The social aspect of the group was also a benefit of participating, and members had gained new friends through their participation: *'I'd say that we gained friendships at a safe place that you know*

you can come to if you're ever in the city.' Many young people highlighted learnings from being involved in Home Stretch, including about their rights, what they were entitled to, about what Home Stretch offers, and the recruitment process. Although being involved with recruiting transition coaches had felt *'a little bit intimidating'* for some young people it was nevertheless a good experience: *'It was very intense, but after my first one, I was fine.'* Some suggestions to improve the YAG included changing the location intermittently, providing transport to meetings, and having more frequent meetings to stay better connected.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are aimed at what actions could be taken to support the scaling up of Home Stretch across WA. We present them according to sector responsible for leaving care services:

- Department of Communities (as Policy makers and service contractors)
- Department of Communities (CPFS) (as service delivery)
- Community Sector (as service delivery and stakeholders)

Department of Communities - as Policy makers and service contractors

- 1) **Establish a state-wide Home Stretch Steering group to support the Scaling up process**
Establishment of a Home Stretch steering group, chaired by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) representative, will contribute to the development of practice infrastructure needed for the adoption of Home Stretch's Core elements. It is imperative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations guide the process of scaling up to ensure representation in Home Stretch processes. A key outcome of the group would be disseminating learnings from the Home Stretch trial for the wider scale up of the model.
- 2) **Utilise co-design processes undertaken in each district to facilitate readiness for Home Stretch service *prior* to contracting**
Place-based, co-design processes will aim to adapt the Home Stretch program to local needs and networks, while offering the opportunity for prospective Home Stretch providers to be supported to deliver its Core elements. As such, co-design will help to facilitate *readiness* for and understanding of the model in the local context, and support locally-based Home Stretch providers to provide a place-based Home Stretch program.
- 3) **Support an extension of a Home Stretch Trial co-design focussed on practices with young people with complex needs**
This recommendation calls for an additional phase of co-design to address the needs of stakeholder groups which were not included in depth in the original phases of co-design. In particular, foster carers, people living in regional areas, and young people with complex needs, for example, young people exiting residential care and young people accessing NDIS. This phase will assist in bringing together diverse stakeholders to inform Home Stretch practices and policy for navigating the NDIS, help to build knowledge for the translation of Home Stretch to regional areas, and include stakeholders who were not included in the original co-design. A co-design extension will build pathways for transitions to independence for young people who need NDIS support, contribute to addressing regional challenges, and leverage local capacity.

Department of Communities (CPFS) – as service delivery

- 4) **Explore co-location of Home Stretch providers in District offices**
Following from the identified benefits of co-location found in the trial, including inter-organisational collaboration, relationship building and enabling smooth transitions, District offices should consider co-locating with Home Stretch providers.

5) **Establish a Leaving Care Practice Specialist in each District**

Establishing a Leaving Care Practice Specialist (LCPS) will contribute to practice infrastructure for Leaving Care processes and the development of practice specialism. The LCPS, operating along the same principles as the Senior Practice Development Officer (SPDO) role, will also facilitate relationships and/ or co-location with local Home Stretch providers. Implementing this recommendation will signal the importance of focussing on Leaving Care planning as a crucial stage of young people's care journey, and help to facilitate knowledge of entitlements across the services system.

6) **Establish a state-wide LCPS network across the Districts**

A state-wide LCPS network will provide a Community of Practice for the dissemination of best practice in leaving care planning and support, and contribute to leaving care policy development for CPFS and services. The network will assist in identifying and disseminating knowledge about the current needs of young people leaving care.

7) **Increase the support young people are able to access**

LCPSs will collaborate with local networks and Home Stretch providers to increase the support young people are able to access. Where absent, LCPSs will establish leaving care networks and providers. The LCPS role aims to build and contribute to local service system supports for young people and provide a network link between CPFS and service systems, both at the local and state-wide level. Such collaboration will increase the likelihood of young people gaining access to post-care support.

Community Sector – as service delivery stakeholders

8) **Facilitate and support the participation of care-experienced young people in future Home Stretch co-design and policy processes**

By facilitating and supporting young people's participation in co-design and policy development processes, the community sector will promote advocacy with and for young people to participate in decisions and processes which affect them. As a result, the experience of care leavers will continue to inform policy processes including the further development and refinement of local Home Stretch programs.

9) **ACCHOs are included in future development of culturally safe Home Stretch practices**

This recommendation builds on learnings from the Anglicare WA – Yorganop partnership and will ensure culturally safe leaving care practices are implemented across Home Stretch's scale up. This will bolster the system-wide change needed to support culturally safe transitions to interdependent living for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

10) **Establish workforce development for increasing skills and knowledge for working with young people across the service system**

Workforce development across the service system in both metropolitan and regional areas will ensure young people are able to access skilled coaches and case workers who understand their particular needs. This will enable Home Stretch providers to draw on a skilled workforce across the service system to meet the needs of care leavers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Youth Advisory Group, Anglicare WA, Yorganop and the District office of Fremantle in addition to the Home Stretch Steering Group have engaged in many processes, meetings, and practices to produce a blueprint for a significant change to extended care services within Western Australia.

It should be acknowledged that the service system already incorporated many aspects of the Home Stretch model including care planning and transition services and that many young people have experienced good support in these services. However, most will agree the system can be improved and Home Stretch offers that opportunity. The Home Stretch trial has contributed to the incorporation of the voices and experiences of young people in the development of processes that affect them. There is now a chance to build on this significant body of practice work to make a real difference for care leavers in this state.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Focus group schedule for the YAG

- 1) Reflecting on your experience in the YAG
 - a. What did you hope to gain from being involved with the YAG? What were your expectations?
 - b. What have you gained from the experience?
 - c. What do you think the Trial has gained from the expertise of the YAG?

- 2) Thinking back to the development stages of the program, in what ways did the YAG contribute to this?
Did you have input in
 - a. Developing the model? If so, how?
 - b. Informing how coaching would take place? If so, in what ways?
 - c. Informing what the mentor role would be? If so, in what ways?

- 3) Do you think the model used in the trial would work in other places?
 - a. Could you explain your reasons for that answer?

- 4) Is there anything you would change about the YAG or your experience as part of Homestretch?
 - a. Prompt; frequency of meetings? Role of members? Role of the YAG?
 - b. What do you think was done well?

Appendix B. Wave 1 interview schedule for trial participants

Demographic Information:

- How old are you?
- Where do you live? (Suburb/ town)

Current Living Situation:

To start with I would like to ask you a few questions about your current living situation and then move to get your views and ideas about the future.

- 1) Are you currently living in care or have you left care?
- 2) What are your current living arrangements?
 - a. With relatives (other than your parents)
 - b. With foster carers
 - c. With others in a residential home
 - d. Living in supported housing (e.g. The foyer)
 - e. Living independently
 - f. Couch surfing
 - g. Staying with friends temporarily
 - h. Other _____
- 3) How long have you been living there? _____ Years _____ Months
- 4) Have you moved a lot –No -- Yes - how many places since you left care?
- 5) If not homeless or temporary - What do you think are the positives of where you are living at the moment?
- 6) If not homeless or temporary -What do you think are the down sides?
- 7) If young person is still in extended foster care arrangement - Now that you are 18 and staying with your foster family, have there been any changes to your living arrangement? Prompt for, in terms of your responsibilities in the home? Additional freedoms (rights)? (NOTE: care arrangement protocols to be provided by Anglicare).
- 8) Have you got any suggestions about what you think could be done to improve things for people in a similar situation in the future?
- 9) At the moment are you
 - a. Studying _____
 - b. Working _____
 - c. Looking for work
 - d. Looking after others (own children, siblings, other family)
 - e. None of the above _____

Planning for independent living:

These next questions ask about living independently.

- 10) What does “independent living” mean to you?
- 11) One role of the workers at Communities/Child protection and other agencies like Crossroads/Wanslea/Navig8 was to work with you on a plan to start getting things set up so that you have what you need when you become independent. People’s plans generally are based on what they think are important for their future. For example, housing, driver’s licence, getting a job, studying a course, paying bills, accessing health services, reconnecting with family members or whatever people think is important for them.
- 12) Do you recall working on any plans or goals of this type with your worker?

- a. If yes, could you tell us a bit about the plans and any aspects that specifically helped you?
 - b. If no, do you think it would be useful to have some plans about what you need?
- 13) Are there particular things you think need to be in place for young people to help in moving on to be independent?
- 14) Can you suggest how you think that workers could best help young people with getting things in place?
- 15) Some people talk about feeling a sense of control over their life as an important part of being independent. On a scale of 1-10, where 10 is 'completely in control' or 'completely independent', where would you place yourself?
- a. Can you tell me your reasons for your answer?
 - b. If YP would like more independence - in what ways would you like to be more independent?
- 16) Could you suggest what you think young people should know about managing a house/tenancy before they move in to a place?

Family, Friends and Connections:

- 17) Do you have regular contact with family members? (Prompt for how often and how – face to face, text, phone etc.). (Prompt for which family members. Note any aspects related to distance from family member)
- a. If family members do not live in same area as the young person – do you get to travel back and see family? Yes/No. If Yes, how often (prompt about how this goes)
- 18) Do you think you have enough contact with family? Can you tell us why you'd say that? (check for whether it varies between family members)
- 19) Can I ask now about your friends? Who would you consider your main friends or mates at the moment? How did you meet? How long have you known each other?
- a. How often would you catch up?
 - b. What are the main things you do when you catch up?
 - c. Is the time you spend with friends at the moment
 - i. About right
 - ii. Too little
 - iii. Too much
 - iv. Not sure
- 20) Thinking about the people who know you the best, how do you think they would describe you?
- 21) Do you have a boyfriend/girlfriend?
- a. No - SKIP
 - b. Yes. How often do you get to see them? (prompt follow up on their conversation/description)
- 22) What are the main ways you stay in touch with people?
- a. Does this suit you?
 - b. Are there downsides? Things you'd like to change about this?
- 23) Who would you spend most time with?
- 24) If you needed help – money to buy something, somewhere to stay, - are there some people who would normally be able to help out? (follow up – e.g. how they may have helped in the past and why that person(s))
- 25) Has Homestretch connected you with a go-to person, or a support person?
- a. Has this been useful for you?
 - b. If so, in what way?
 - c. Can you provide an example?

- 26) If you needed to talk about something personal, have you got a 'go to' person or people you can always rely on for this? (follow up)

School Education:

- 27) What year were you in when you finished school?
 a. How many schools did you go to over the years?
- 28) Looking back what could be done to improve people's experience at school?
- 29) Did family/carers and/or workers talk with you about your plans when you leave school?
 a. If yes, what were the plans? How did it go? (Prompt for what happened after leaving school)
 b. If no, do you think it would have been useful? Who do you think would have been best to talk about this with?
- 30) Have you done any paid work/had a job while you are at school?
 a. No
 b. Yes – what was that?

Post School:

- 31) What did you do immediately after you left school?
 a. Study at TAFE
 b. Apprenticeship training program
 c. Work
 d. Looking for work
 e. Uni
- 32) If you are studying – what supports do you have to help with study? What are some of the challenges with studying? Is someone helping you to purchase computers, books and other resources necessary for study?
- 33) Do you need support or receive support for numeracy and literacy?
 a. If yes, what kinds of support? Who from? How often?
- 34) Have you got any plans for further education and training? If yes, prompt for what these are.
- 35) Would you say Homestretch has helped you to maintain education, training, employment? If not involved with these, is Homestretch helping you towards any goals around education, training or employment?
- 36) What would make it easier for you to attend education or training courses?
- 37) If participant has a job, ask about the job (what, how many hours a week, how did you get the job?)

Living Costs:

- 38) Could I ask what money you have to live on each week?
 a. Amount and source – work, Centrelink, other
- 39) Transport: What are the two main ways that you get where you need to go?
 a. Public transport
 b. Walking or bike
 c. Uber or taxi
 d. Getting a lift
 e. Have my own car or motorbike
- 40) Does the cost of transport stop you getting things done?
 a. No
 b. Sometimes – what can't you do because of cost?
 c. Often – what can't you do because of cost?
- 41) If housed - Do you pay rent or board at the moment? Amount pw?
- 42) What other regular bills and costs do you have?

- 43) Do you worry about not having enough money?
- Never or rarely
 - About half the time
 - All the time
- 44) Do you think Homestretch has helped you to get things you need, or meet your living costs?
- If so, can you give an example of this?
 - If not, what do you think it could/should help with?
- 45) Do you have someone who you can always talk to about money to get advice?
- Yes – who? Useful?
 - No
- 46) What do you think is important for people to know about money? Did anyone talk to you about this prior to living independently?

Health and Other Services:

- 47) Do you have a regular doctor/GP that you see or go to the same General Practice/Medical Centre?
- No
 - Yes – how long have you been going there? How easy is it to get an appointment when you need it?
- 48) Do you experience any disability or any on-going health needs?
- 49) Do you have to pay for medications or other health items regularly?
- Yes
 - No
 - Sometimes
- 50) On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the service you have received through Homestretch? Can you tell me your reasons for choosing that number?
- 51) What services have been offered to you through Homestretch?
- How useful have you found these?
 - If useful, in what ways?
 - If not, how do you think these could be improved?
 - Do you receive services apart from HS? If so, which? Prompt; have they helped?
- 52) Thinking about the HS services you received in your location, do you think these services would help young people in other places?
- 53) As a care leaver, you have particular legal rights and responsibilities, like...(e.g.)(NOTE: care arrangement protocols to be provided by Anglicare). Have you been told/taught much about these? If so, what have you been told? If not, would you like to know more about your legal rights and responsibilities?
- 54) Other than any other services/places you regularly go? (With each yes ask about how difficult/easy it is to use the service)
- Other health services
 - NDIS
 - Mental health services such as counsellor/support worker/psychologist/therapist
 - If yes, ask about how difficult/easy it is to use the service
 - If yes, ask whether they have a mental health care plan through their GP
 - Centrelink
 - Youth services
 - Anything else?
- 55) Are there other services you think would be useful but haven't been to?
- 56) Do you have a 'go to' person to give you advice on how to get services you need? If yes, who.... If no, would that be helpful?

Background and Identity:

- 57) These next questions ask about your family background.
- 58) Have you been told much about your history in relation to where your family are from/lived?
Your family and cultural background?
- If yes, what sorts of things have you been told? Are there other things you would like to know about your background?
 - If no, are there things you would like to know about your background?
- 59) Do you identify as belonging to any particular cultural or ethnic groups?
- If yes, are there events, places, people you visit that make you feel connected to your background and culture?
 - Are there other things you would like to do about this?
- 60) On a scale of 1-10, how important is knowing about your background to you?
1-Not important at all 10-Extremely Important
- 61) Do you have family living outside of Perth (or the area in which they live)? If so, – Do you have the opportunity to go back to your home area or family's home area?

Prior to proceeding with the next section ask:

- For females: do you have any children?
- For males: are you aware of having any children?

IF NOT A PARENT – that's the end of our questions, so I really appreciate your time. Is there anything else you think it is important for us to know or to change for young people living in out of home care?

End interview by having a discussion with the young person about getting in touch with them again in 6 months

- Note for them when that will be (month of the year)
- Check the best way to get in touch with them
- Ask if there is another way we could get in touch if they move or their contact details change

Parenting:

- 62) Thinking back to before your child was born, where did you get health information or health checks? Could you tell me about what helped you prepare for the baby's arrival? (prompt for all types of planning health and non-health)
- 63) Was there anything that was especially helpful or individuals that you found helpful?
- 64) Looking back is there anything you can suggest would have been helpful? Or anything that was particularly unhelpful?
- 65) Have the Homestretch services helped you in terms of parenting?
- Prompt for; practical support? Getting connected with services? Emotional/relationship support (providing a go-to person)?
- 66) Is your child with you full time or some of the time? (e.g. co-parenting) (if baby is in care ask about whether there is regular contact and how do they find that)
- 67) In your experience what are some of the best and hardest parts about being a parent?
- 68) Do you have someone you can always go to when you want to find out about things related to your child or about parenting? (prompt about who etc.)
- 69) If a young person you knew was having trouble with her child where would you suggest she or he get some help?
- 70) Thinking back are there things when you were in care that might have been helpful to know about being a new parent or raising a child?

End of questions – is there anything else you can think you would like to tell us about that would be helpful in improving things in the future?

Appendix C. Generic interview schedule for practitioners

- 1) What resources does the Department of Communities need for Homestretch?
- 2) How are the expected outcomes (or results) for participants in the Trial being achieved?
Prompt for the following domains:
 - a. Interpersonal
 - b. Well being
 - c. Living skills
 - d. Education, employment, and training
 - e. Social inclusion
 - f. Economic inclusion (e.g. financial outcomes, access to employment)
 - g. Confident and safe parenting by young people
 - h. Services to meet physical and mental health needs
- 3) What are some factors that helped to achieve the goals (or the results that were just mentioned)?
- 4) Where there challenges to achieving the goals? If so, what were the challenges?
- 5) Are there any unexpected outcomes from the Trial?
- 6) If you wanted to have Homestretch in other places, what would you need?
- 7) What resources are needed for Department of Communities staff to involve/ introduce young people in Homestretch? Prompt for:
 - a. Time
 - b. Staff
 - c. Cost
- 8) What might stop young people engaging with Homestretch?
- 9) Have any young people dropped out of the Homestretch Trial?
 - a. If so, why did they drop out?
- 10) What do young people get with Homestretch that they would not get otherwise?
- 11) How does Homestretch meet the needs of diverse groups of young people (e.g. cultural, disability, gender, and sexuality)?
 - a. Can you give some examples?
- 12) When a young person finishes with Homestretch, what happens next? What will they need?
- 13) What services do you think young people will require from Department of Communities after the Trial?

Appendix D. Interview schedule for foster carers

Demographic questions:

1. How long have you been a foster carer?
2. How many young people are in your care at present?
3. How long has the young person participating in the Homestretch program been in your care?
4. Did you know the young person before they came into your care? If yes, prompt for detail.

Interview questions:

- 1) What were your early understandings of what Homestretch was going to offer?
 - a. Have you found these were in line with what the trial has offered?
 - b. Or if there were none, what would you like to have known before starting out?
- 2) In your opinion, what does Homestretch offer young people turning 18 which would not otherwise be available to them?
- 3) What did you find positive about being involved in the Homestretch trial?
 - a. What were the positive aspects for the young person in your care?
- 4) What do you think could be improved about the Homestretch program? Is there anything you would change about the experience?
- 5) Were there any requirements or changes for your family in becoming part of Homestretch?
 - a. Prompt for, in what ways did things change? What was required?
- 6) Has the trial had any unforeseen or unintended impacts for you?
- 7) Have you noticed any differences for the young person in your care?
 - a. If yes, in what ways are things different?
- 8) Overall, do you think the trial went/ is going well?
 - a. If we were looking to expand the trial in the future, what are the things families need to have in place for it to work well in your opinion?
 - b. Do you think it would work in other areas of WA?
 - c. If not, what aspects would need to be adapted or changed?
- 9) Overall, how would you summarise your experience of the Homestretch trial?

Appendix E. Sample codes for interview analysis

Code Sub code/s
Challenges
COVID
Crisis
Cultural, responsiveness
Housing
Including diverse young people
Information sharing
Lack of capacity in regional, rural areas to provide leaving care services
Relational
Social inclusion
Support for foster carers
Systemic, organisational
Current aftercare response without HS
Department Response
Leaving Care Services
Reliance on good worker
Engaging young people in Homestretch
Foster carer understandings of HS
Information
Relationships
Smooth transition
Homestretch Practices with young people
Access to funding

Code | Sub code/s

Leaving care funding
Rent subsidy
Staying on
Invest in me
Coach traits and skills
Coaches
Examples of tasks
Experienced worker
Highly individualised approach
Promoting self determination
Reflective practice
Relational work
Role modelling
Linking in
Opt-in, opt-out
Support Circles
Eco-mapping
Working with diverse young people
Aboriginal and Cultural
Disability
How does HS engage YP leaving group homes
Individualised, person-centred practice
Particular YP are supported by HS
Team, organisation

Code Sub code/s
Young parents
Replication, scale-up, resourcing
ACCOs
Community of practice
Continuity of support
Foster placement characteristics
FTE
Leaving care team
HS model
Ample Funding
Community relationships
Early engagement, extended engagement
HS Staff and Coaches
Leadership
Manage the demand and hold space for YP to return to HS
Not everything designed will be scaled up
opt in opt out
YP accessing funds
Include YP, the YAG members, to be a part of scaling
Location
Mini-design process to contextualise HS
Relationship with worker
Resourcing needs to increase with demand
Stable accommodation

Code Sub code/s
Systems
Stakeholder involvement
District Office
Foster Carers and Foster Carers Association
People not involved
Steering Group
Key sectors not involved
Yorganop
Young People, YAG
What is working well
Differences for foster carers
Differences made to the YP
Organisational
Yorganop
Other services
Strengths of young people
Transition to post-care support
Young people's needs after exiting HS
Information sharing
Ongoing support - whether from coach or District
On-going support network
Support for ongoing medical, health, dental needs