INCREASING HIGHER EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS IN OOH

Child Aware Approaches Conference
Mary McKinnon - May 2016

WE LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS

WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY
TO BUILD A BETTER LIFE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITIES

OUR VALUES

WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS
We are people people. Relationships come first. Listening helps us understand.

WE ARE IMAGINATIVE
We are imaginative in our thinking and open to new ideas and ways of doing things.

WE ARE COURAGEOUS
We are courageous in our convictions. We stand up for what we believe in.

WE ARE RESPONSIVE
We are responsive to needs and determined to get things done and do them well.

OUR PURPOSE
To partner with people and change lives for the better

CHANGE PLATFORM
- We will continue to support children in a child-centred, family-focused and community-based way
- We are building upon our safe and effective foundations
- We will evolve and adapt to improve outcomes for children and young people
- Work flexibly to do the right thing for children and young people every day
- Honestly review what we do, build on what works and be open to change

OUR MOTIVATION
Championing opportunity for all

OUR PROMISE
We promise to:
- Keep children and young people at the heart of everything we do
- Recognise that families are children’s first and most enduring relationship
- Work in partnership with children, young people, families and carers
- Respect children and young people’s need for permanent homes
- Seek the same outcomes for children and young people in care as afforded to all other children and young people
- Promote the therapeutic value of stable, trusting relationships

WHERE WE’LL FOCUS

FINDING THE RIGHT PATH TO PERMANENCY
- Finding security, stability, love, identity and belonging for each child
- Connecting children and young people to their communities and culture

INVOLVE EVERYONE WHO MATTERS
- Linking up with other agencies who can contribute to successful outcomes for children and families

MAKING IT WORK FOR CHILDREN WITH MORE COMPLEX NEEDS
- Redesigning residential services for the best care
- Training our foster carers to build family relationships using evidence-based models

CHANGE THE WAY WE DO THINGS
- Explore new technology to better capture the positive outcomes achieved

FOCUS ON RESULTS
- Further develop the LWB Outcomes Framework to show evidence of the difference we make
THE LWB OUTCOMES APPROACH

Implement an Outcomes Framework

Use Data to Drive Outcomes for Individuals

Try New Things to see if we can get Better Results

Focus on Practice Culture and Leadership as Key Ingredients
Care leavers rarely transition to higher education.

They are largely excluded from the level of education that brings the highest wage premiums and lifetime rewards.

Despite their extremely low university participation rates, there is no national agenda for improvement.

• Expectations and aspirations of those key influencers impact on actual educational attainment.

• Positively perceived relationships that provide emotional and practical support are important.

• Enhanced support systems to increase participation, attainment and retention rates are needed:
  – REACH Project with Western Sydney University
  – Youth Advocacy Project
  – Edmund Rice Education Australia
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Supporting children and young people in OOHC to access higher education opportunities
WHAT IS THE REACH PROGRAM?

LODESTAR PROGRAM

PURPOSE:
Lodestar recognises the unique educational needs of the out of home care population and seeks to assist in building the aspirations and capacity of young people in out-of-home care to achieve higher education.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Aspirations and motivation for higher education are enhanced
2. Knowledge about higher education is increased (including pathways, life and career options)
3. Academic potential is enhanced
4. Carer, family and care services knowledge about higher education is broadened
5. Lodestar projects are valued by community partners and stakeholders.
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**SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OOHC ACCESS HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

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**Ultimate Outcomes – what we expect to see in the long term**

- Each participant will develop a positive outlook on education and higher education
- Each participant will develop a connection with Western Sydney University in regards to higher education
- Each participant will have improved their current educational status (eg return to study or re-engagement in current education)

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**Intermediate outcomes – what we expect to see in the medium-term**

- Carers understand their role in relation to YP’s educational outcomes
- YPs have greater skills and confidence to plan and make their own decisions about their future and plan their higher education
- Carers have greater investment in the potential of the YP to pursue higher education
- YPs have increased understanding and knowledge about what programs and resources are available and how the university can be accessed, and how the university can support them to access university
- Case managers have learned how to better support education aspirations for YP

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**Immediate outcomes – what we expect to see immediately**

- Suitable young people are identified and recruited to the program
- Young people are actively engaged in the activities
- Young people complete the program young people, carers, case managers have increased awareness about higher education opportunities and access to Western Sydney University
- Effective relationships are developed between case managers, carers and young people to start working together and exploring higher education
EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

• Program Logic was developed

• Evaluation tools were developed including:
  o Pre/post survey questionnaire for YP, carers & case managers
  o Activity evaluation sheets
  o Manager’s observation logs
  o School attendance rates will be obtained at the end of the program
  o Debrief workshop – Inca Consulting, State P&Q, Western Sydney University and 4 case managers

• Comparison group from Sydney South – the same number of young people, carers & case managers who completed the reach program
OUTCOMES
“WHAT KEY THING DID YOU LEARN?”

Don’t doubt yourself

That nothing is impossible

There is more out there than you think!
OUTCOMES IDENTIFIED:
Clear positive impact on knowledge, views and aspirations

- Understanding of different learning pathways
- How to present oneself for a job interview
- Confidence to pursue one’s own path
- University offerings and opportunities available
- Understanding of what university life is like
- Thinking about what to do post-school
At the end of the program, case managers thought that:

• higher education was a likely pathway for many of the young people, but not necessarily straight after school

• a major benefit of the program was in opening up the young people’s thinking about what their future might look like.
AN UNEXPECTED OUTCOME