

BRIGHTER FUTURES

— OUTER EAST —

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BRIGHTER
FUTURES TRANSFORMATION PILOT

SUMMARY REPORT





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SUMMARY OF IMPACTS

Overall

- The Brighter Futures Pilot has made inroads into changing mindsets and building skills to support young people identify their goals and connect with the community (Impact 1).
- The Brighter Futures Pilot has demonstrated the value of promoting and engaging the voice of lived experience in service development (co-design). It provided a new way of working and showed that young people have the capacity to be leaders and equal partners in service design and delivery when well supported (Impact 2).
- The Brighter Futures Pilot has built the skills and developed the confidence of the young people in the Youth Ambassador Program to work with services to improve outcomes for other young people (Impact 3).
- The Brighter Futures Pilot designed and trialled a new community connector service model that has made a difference to the lives of many young people and is augmenting the statewide Better Futures approach. This model is affordable and scalable (Impact 12).
- Partner and Community Organisations have learnt how to collaborate in a meaningful and productive way, including with each other, young people and carers. This approach to collaboration is highly valued. The Brighter Futures partnership has brought new resources and opportunities to the Outer East and can provide a mechanism to expand on this into the future. (Impact 13).

For Young People

- Young people who participate in Brighter Futures are being heard by their case managers, believing they have strengths and are actively identifying their goals and dreams (Impact 4).
- Young people are building self confidence (believing in themselves) and creating new pathways and opportunities through the community connections that have been facilitated (Impact 8).

For Practice Champions

- Practice champions/case managers are adopting a strengths based framework in their practice (Impact 5).
- Practice champions/case managers are influencing their colleagues to also change the way they think and practice (Impact 6).
- Practice champions are appreciating and valuing access to the community connections for young people (Impact 11).

For Community

- The broader community that has engaged with Brighter futures is aware of the needs of young people who have a care experience, and are feeling valued and rewarded through their connections with these young people (Impact 9).
- The Outer East has an expanding group of individuals and organisations who are keen and willing to invest in young people with an OoHC experience. This is unlocking new resources and opportunities (Impact 10).

For Partner Organisations

- Partnering organisations are starting to build in systemic change which can support a strength-based way of working (Impact 7).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth Leadership

That a commitment to Youth Leadership is demonstrated through policy, program development and investment within organisations and across the broader system, including in Government. This includes:

- Organisations developing their own internal systems and structures to embed youth leadership, and promote the opportunities and benefits of a workforce with lived experience.
- Investment at the service system level to promote youth leadership and provide necessary support mechanisms to enable this.

Practice and Culture Change

That organisations in the Brighter Futures partnership continue to nurture and develop a culture that values strength based thinking and collaboration within and across services. This includes investing in:

- Cross sector professional learning opportunities in strengths-based practice and cultural development, for leadership, new staff and middle management.
- The development and sharing of practices and tools which support the identification and realisation of young people's priorities and strengths.
- Continuation of Communities of Practice for ongoing reflective practice and support of practice development and cultural change.

Community Connections

That a dedicated community connector role be recognised and adequately resourced as a key and core service component within the Out of Home and Leaving care suite of services at the subregional level as a minimum. This role will focus on building the network of community connections and availability of local social capital to those in and leaving OoHC. It will:

- Bring community members together for networking, training, support and further awareness raising.
- Provide flexible supports that respond to the community's capacity to engage and every young person's needs.
- Promote and highlight opportunities within organisations and community networks (including through sharing good news and lived experience stories).

Collaborative Governance

That the stakeholders involved in this Pilot, including funders, Community Services Organisations and community members advocate to Government for investment in local level collaboration and commit to sharing the responsibility for improving outcomes for young people with the community and the broader service system. This includes in relation to the oversight and implementation of Better Futures.

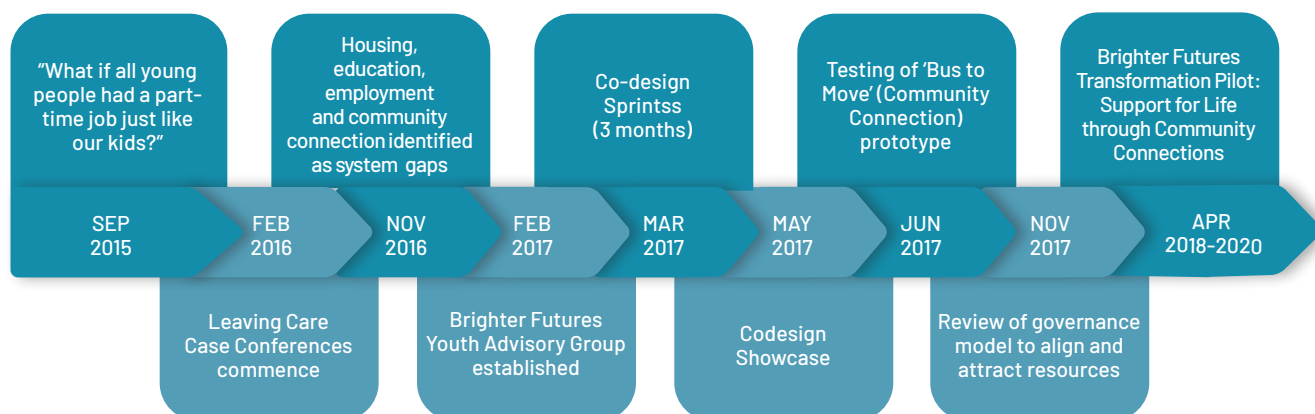
1. INTRODUCTION

The Brighter Futures Transformation Pilot: Learning for Life through Community Connections (Brighter Futures Pilot) is a two year pilot which connects young people with an experience of out of home care (OoHC) with local community members who can help them build their strengths, explore their passions and achieve their goals.

The Brighter Futures Pilot was developed by the Outer East Children and Youth Area Partnership (OECYAP), a place based, collective impact initiative to improve outcomes for children and young people at risk of entering, in or transitioning from OoHC. The OECYAP was co-funded by the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for five years from 2014-19 and was one of eight sites across Victoria.

Over a five year period, the OECYAP brought people together to identify and respond to the issues facing young people (see diagram 1 for its journey over this time). It trialled and learnt from different approaches before settling on the four streams of work that underpin the Brighter Futures Pilot:

- Youth leadership – youth voice and the active participation of local young people who have experienced OoHC in the design, delivery and decision-making elements of the Pilot is essential to successful community connections. Led by CREATE Foundation.
- Practice and culture change – the Brighter Futures approach prioritises regular and ongoing practice and cultural change support for case managers and team leaders in organisations supporting young people in OoHC. Led by Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL).
- Community connections – Community Connector roles focussed on community outreach to create opportunities and support young people’s connections to grow and mature over time. Led by Anchor.
- Collaborative governance – brings together State and Local Government with funded providers, community groups and services, young people and carers in the Outer East. This collective action model requires central coordination to succeed. Supported by Department of Education and Training, DET.



The Pilot aimed to create impacts for young people, case managers who were recruited as practice champions (PC), the organisations they worked within (called partner organisations (PO), the community and the service system.

A formal evaluation of the Pilot is being undertaken by the BSL. The report is due in June 2020.

2. THIS REPORT

A Preliminary Findings and Recommendations Report was commissioned to highlight and identify the impact of the Pilot's work and establish direction prior to the end of the funding cycle.

This report is a summary report. The full report is available on the Brighter Futures website.

The report is organised primarily around the four streams of work identified above. For each stream, the impact on the relevant main players is identified. This means that impacts for each player are spread across the various streams (see the summary at the beginning for the same information organised by player).

The report was informed by data collected via two surveys, supplemented with some targeted interviews and desk top analysis of a range of documents which recorded discussions and learnings throughout the Pilot.

Table 1 summarises the results from the first part of the survey which explored how the Pilot had transformed practice for each of the main players.

Attachment A provides a detailed summary of key challenges/barriers, what worked and what has changed for each stream.



Table 1: Level of agreement with transformation statements

Young people		
Are supported to identify their strengths, passions and goals	63%	2.6
Are supported to connect with community	59%	2.6
Value the opportunity to connect with community	48%	2.5
Have an improved sense of self-belief	48%	2.4
Have an improved sense of agency	22%	2.1
Community		
Value the opportunity to connect with young people with a care experience	42%	2.2
Have increased awareness regarding young people with a care experience	38%	2.2
Are utilising their skills and networks to support young people with a care experience	38%	2.2
Believe that young people with a care experience have unique strengths, passions and goals	35%	2.2
Believe that they have the skills and networks to support young people with a care experience	38%	2.0
Feel supported to connect with young people with a care experience	20%	1.8
Practice champions		
Have increased understanding of the importance of working with young people to identify their strengths, passions and goals	58%	2.4
Value the opportunity to connect young people with community	56%	2.4
Have an understanding of the importance of supporting young people to have greater agency in decisions that affect them	52%	2.4
Have increased understanding of the importance of connecting young people with community	54%	2.4
Are identifying the strengths, passions, goals of young people	42%	2.3
Are supported to work with young people around their strengths, passions, goals	46%	2.2
Are finding ways to increase youth voice and agency in decisions that affect them	36%	2.1
Are prioritising time for conversations with young people about their strengths, passions, goals	35%	2.0
Are prioritising time to support young people to connect with community	24%	2.0
Are supported to connect young people with community	28%	1.9
Partnering Organisation		
Are increasing the focus on young people's strengths, passions and goals in case management practice	40% (43%)	2.2 (2.3)
Are supported to increase the focus on young people's strengths, passions and goals in case management practice	36% (45%)	2.2 (2.5)
Are supported to work in a more collaborative way across the Outer East	36% (45%)	2.2 (2.4)
Have increased awareness of resources in the broader community and service system in the Outer East	36% (45%)	2.1 (2.4)
Are working in a more collaborative way across in the Outer East	36% (45%)	2.1 (2.4)
Are supported to connect with resources in the broader community and service system in the Outer East	33% (42%)	2.0 (2.3)
Are providing opportunities for Practice Champions to share Pilot learnings with their peers	24% (30%)	2.0 (2.2)
Are connecting with resources in the broader community and service system in the Outer East	28% (35%)	1.9 (2.2)
Are sharing the responsibility for improving outcomes for young people with the community and broader service system	21% (26%)	1.8 (2.1)

Notes:

- Weighted average: 0=disagree, 1= unsure, 2= agree, 3 = strongly agree
- The survey responses for level of agreement about the partnering organisations elicited the highest number of unsure responses. Three respondents answered unsure for all questions, and two for all questions except one. These respondents indicated they were unsure because they were too new to the Pilot or did not have enough contact with the partnering organisations to comment. For this reason, these responses were removed and the agreement scores recalculated (in table 1 the bracketed figures show the revised results)

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Overview

The survey asked respondents if they agreed with 30 different transformation statements. Table 1 lists these statements, a weighted average score and the proportion that strongly agreed. A weighted average score of two or above, means that the average response was one of agreement.

Across all the statements, the highest level of agreement was for statements that indicated an understanding/or valuing of the practice and culture change goals – such as believing that young people had strengths, passions and goals, valuing opportunities to connect with community or understanding the importance of supporting young people to have greater agency in the decisions that affect them.

However, there was slightly less agreement for statements related to the degree of implementation of the practice and culture change goals, such as practice champions being able to prioritise time to support young people to connect with the community or for partner organisations connecting with resources in the broader community and the service system.

As a snapshot of potential impact, it shows that the Pilot activities are changing mindsets and building skills and that it is supporting a collaborative environment in the Outer East which is committed to providing new opportunities and improving outcomes for young people with an experience of OoHC. The service system is still learning how to change practice, but progress is being made.

The Brighter Futures Pilot has made inroads into changing mindsets and building skills to support young people identify their goals and connect with the community (Impact 1).



3.2 Youth Leadership

The youth leadership stream has promoted youth voice and the active participation of local young people who have experienced OoHC in the co-design and ongoing delivery of Brighter Futures.

The support of the Brighter Futures Youth Ambassador Group was integral to this stream of work. Consisting of up to six young people, the aim was to establish a local and genuine partnership model that valued young people as co-designers of positive change and supported them to become positive role models for their peers.

Youth Ambassadors provided regular feedback on the design of prototypes.

By April 2019, the Youth Ambassadors were linked into all aspects of the Pilot, participating in Executive meetings, preparing and delivering material to promote and build support for practice change and community connection, and participating in the evaluation. They also produced a video to share their views and participated in a panel alongside the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

The Brighter Futures Pilot has demonstrated the value of promoting and engaging the voice of lived experience in service development (co-design). It provided a new way of working and showed that young people have the capacity to be leaders and equal partners in service design and delivery when well supported (Impact 2).

The Brighter Futures Pilot has built the skills and developed the confidence of the young people in the Youth Ambassador Program to work with services to improve outcomes for other young people (Impact 3).

Youth Ambassadors are paid and they received a range of professional development opportunities to support them to build skills and knowledge applicable in life and work, such as public speaking, co-design and positive psychology training.

Things changed when the young people were able to tell their story... jelled the group; crystallised the focus (K)

Youth ambassadors connect with other people with a care experience and use their expertise to offer the program a much needed young person perspective. (YA)

The impact on Youth Ambassadors is evident in their confidence (PCG)

As a new way of doing business the implementation of the Youth Leadership stream was one of the most challenging and impactful of all the streams of work. The youth voice “ebbed and flowed” during the Pilot.

It was sometimes difficult to access and mobilise the youth voice element in a timely manner. For example, to respond to opportunities that were arising in partner organisations or as part of the practice change activities. In part this is likely to have been due to the external facilitation and “separateness” of the program from other aspects of the Pilot. With different organisations leading different parts of the Pilot they did not always naturally link across to support other components.

We also learnt that:

- The existing systems and structures to support the youth voice saw young people primarily as advocates and were not orientated for the type of engagement that Brighter Futures was seeking. The Pilot tried to give young people a voice to lead and create change and be part of the solutions. They were to be “equals” in the process, however this required a shift in mindset that was not always encouraged by the broader OoHC system.
- That our organisations are still learning to how to do co-design, and are lacking internal structures and funding to support this.
- It takes time to build a team of Youth Ambassadors. It took a while for the young people to “gel” as a group, and then to develop the skills they needed to be effective.
- The Youth Ambassadors were keen to engage with, and bring in the voice, of other young people with an OoHC experience into their work. However, this function was not included in the original design.

The Pilot has sought to upskill the Youth Ambassadors to be effective change agents, while also providing a supportive environment. Survey respondents identify that growing, promoting and supporting the Youth Ambassador group is important if there is to be a viable and sustainable pool of young people for organisations to access to support co-design. It means ongoing monitoring of their needs and investment.

Moving forward, there is interest in exploring the mechanisms for engaging young people and by which they engage. This includes to develop opportunities for peer support and leadership roles which will drive a youth centric approach to service delivery.

Recommendation 1:

That a commitment to Youth Leadership is demonstrated through policy, program development and investment within organisations and across the broader system, including in Government. This includes:

- Organisations developing their own internal systems and structures to embed youth leadership, and promote the opportunities and benefits of a workforce with lived experience
- Investment at the service system level to promote youth leadership and provide necessary support mechanisms.

3.3 Strengthening Practice and Culture Change

The Strengthening Practice and Culture Change stream of work built the capacity of around 22 Practice Champions in OoHC and leaving care services to adopt an “Advantaged Thinking” mindset and practices when working with young people transitioning from care.

Advantaged Thinking centres on a Capabilities approach which gives young people a clear voice about what they want to achieve to assist them identify and own their journey and build the connections in the community to help them achieve this (see also section 3.4).

The process identifies and gives priority to those things that are intrinsically important to the young person, rather than what the system or their case manager may think is important. It encourages young people to think beyond the basics of life, such as housing, jobs and money to who and where they want to be, and importantly what makes them feel that they “belong”. It is something that the system has never addressed before. The process also directly addresses current practice which is seen as risk adverse and deficit focused, and provides a different way of working for case managers with high caseloads and competing priorities.

Practice champions, located in partner organisations, were expected to drive practice change across a placed-based system, including in Advantaged Thinking, to improve continuity for young people and to address fragmentation and siloed work practices.

The key change tools were Advantaged Thinking training and coaching, tools and resources and Communities of Practice.

The impact of practice and culture change was significant across a number of players:

- Young people who participate in Brighter Futures are being heard by their case managers; believing that they have strengths and are actively identifying their goals and dreams (Impact 4).
- Practice champions/case managers are adopting a strengths based framework in their practice (Impact 5).
- Practice champions/case managers are influencing their colleagues to also change the way they think and practice (Impact 6).
- Partnering organisations are starting to build in systemic change which can support an Advantaged Thinking way of working (Impact 7).

I feel most of my clients whom have engaged, have left feeling empowered. Whether it be due to the community connector they had been linked in with or the strength based approach in identifying their interests, strengths and passions. (PC)

A young person I case managed stated for weeks that they were ‘good at nothing’, however going through the (Advantaged Thinking) resources provided, we were able to pull out her strengths from what she enjoys doing. From this we were then able to connect this young person who is normally very disconnected to a community group and they are thriving and enjoying it. Their confidence has also sky rocketed. (PC)

I have been able to (apply) a strength based approach all (sic), to which I may not of until I did take on the skillset. Although it can be very demanding and difficult to make it the forefront amongst the workloads (PC)

Practice Champions are role modelling Advantaged Thinking and challenging the use of stigmatising and deficit focussed language when they encounter it with their colleagues (B)

While high caseloads and competing priorities continue to challenge the implementation of Brighter Futures in the workplace, practice champions are finding creative ways to promote the tools and resources and support a strengths based approach across all areas of their work.

It is recognised that change takes time, and early adopters are those with whom there is a natural fit, and an alignment of values and a capability to apply the thinking to themselves as well as others. The Communities of Practice and opportunities to share learnings have been critical in both supporting and promoting changed mindsets and practice change.

Examples of Community Connections include:

- Case managers need to invest in the engagement with the young person and persevere with the Advantaged Thinking. The young person may be facing challenges in their lives and not initially see the value of the approach, and/or have difficulties in keeping appointments or making commitments. Case managers doing this well identify that keeping the conversation open about the connection and maintaining a strengths based approach regardless of what else is going on works.
- Middle management needs to be invested in the change agenda, and support the embedding of Advantaged Thinking and strength based principles within teams and the culture of organisations.
- That part of the answer may lie in embedding Advantage Thinking earlier in the cycle of care, so that young people are introduced to this way of thinking when they first enter rather than just when they leave the system; and case managers are thinking about community connections early on.

Important shifts over time which have responded to these challenges include:

- Ongoing development and distribution of new tools which support implementation, and new sharing platforms. This has been important for addressing issues and challenges at the practice level.
- The establishment of a Leaving Care practice group of team leaders and middle managers from all partner organisations to promote and inform about Advantage Thinking and explore ways to support internal organisational change. This is assisting partner organisations to embed new practice.
- Bringing on new practice champions to lead and influence, including to provide coaching and training support in a timely manner
- Promoting a team approach across organisations, supporting continuity of care, including over time.

We now need to maintain the significant gains made and continue to exert influence, including to embed Advantaged Thinking earlier in a young person's life and across all areas of practice.

Recommendation 2:

That organisations in the Brighter Futures partnership continue to nurture and develop a culture that values strength based thinking and collaboration within and across services. This includes investing in:

- Cross sector professional learning opportunities in strengths-based practice and cultural development, for Leadership, new staff and middle management
- The development and sharing of practices and tools which support the identification and realisation of young people's priorities and strengths.

Continuation of Communities of Practice for ongoing reflective practice and support of practice development and cultural change

3.4 Community Connections

The community connections stream of work increased awareness of young people transitioning from care in the community, identified and made available the social capital in the community and provided a mechanism for connecting young people and community.

Central to this element are two full time community connectors who “turn outward” and connect young people with community based opportunities that help them to explore their passions, build on their strengths and achieve their goals.

Examples of Connections

- A young person with an aspiration to become a police officer connected to a leading constable to gain insights into the role. A possible work experience placement is the next step (C).
- A young person is passionate about cars and wanting to be a diesel mechanic – linked to local business owned by a car enthusiast who coordinates car exhibitions (C).
- A community member helped a young person to create a personalised business brand (D).
- A young musician connected to a music producer reported that that the connection had changed her life. She said she got a lot out of the process of being able to turn her lyrics into music, and felt a strong personal connection with the music producer who she felt understood her (S).
- A connection saw the young person gain a meaningful link to his local community as well as gaining him the benefits of an employment pathway via the Belgravia Structured Work placement program. He also gained a meaningful personal and ongoing connection to the staff (S).

This stream of work has also significantly impacted on all key players:

- Young people are building self confidence (believing in themselves) and creating new pathways and opportunities through the community connections that have been facilitated. (Impact 8).
- The community that has engaged in the Outer East is aware of the needs of young people who have a care experience, and are valuing and benefitting from connecting with young people (Impact 9).
- The Outer East has an expanding group of individuals and organisations who are keen and willing to invest in young people with an OoHC experience. It is unlocking new resources and opportunities (Impact 10).
- Practice champions are appreciating and valuing access to the community connections for young people (Impact 11).
- The Brighter Futures Pilot designed and trialed a new community connector service model that has made a difference to the lives of many young people and is augmenting the statewide Better Futures approach. This model is affordable and scalable. (Impact 12)

(It has).... achieved a cultural shift within organisations and the broader community towards recognising the value that care leavers bring to our community.(DHHS)

A local business owner and sole trader, got so much out of her first meeting with a young person that she wanted to offer her casual work straight away. She reported being inspired by the young person and has looked at her business's processes and systems to explore how she could support her as an employee.(CC)

Young people get to experience faith in humanity, belief that people look out for each other and that everyone can make a difference (CO)

.... enabling a young person to develop connections outside of the department and organisation personnel. Young people are given a great opportunity to look to the future without deliberating over the past (YA)

The initial understanding that the community was an untapped resource which could be accessed by young people has proven to be true. There is widespread support and understanding of the value of the community connections and the benefits for young people.

It also confirmed what the young people told us in the shaping of the Pilot – that the most foundational challenge to address was that of social isolation. As one young person put it “to get a house I need a job, to get a job I need an education, and to get an education I need to be surrounded by people who care”. This meant focussing on the young person’s unique life goals by fostering meaningful and sustainable relationships, not the outcome (whether that be education, employment, health and wellbeing or housing) itself.

The Community Connection role evolved over the course of the Pilot. This included:

- Moving from a focus on finding and brokering connections to also providing direct support to young people and case managers for the connection process.
- An increasing focus on raising awareness, and promoting the benefits of community connection to case managers, including to introduce them to community development concepts re building of social capital (this was particularly important within the context of Better Futures and promoting and facilitating connections which responded to goals and passions, rather than “basic” requirements such as housing or income)
- Expanding access to the connections to all case managers and providing support to connect in an “Advantaged Thinking” framework.

We have learnt that:

- Most organisations and individuals engage willingly and enthusiastically once they learn about the experiences of young people leaving care and understand how and why these young people miss out making community connections. There is a strong view that there is still much untapped potential in the community including in the corporate world and possibly also in schools.
- There are different levels of readiness within the community to be able to connect. Some engage quickly and easily, while others require support and assistance. A flexible support approach is necessary.
- Building a community network requires a particular skill set and expertise to identify and make real opportunities, at the systems level and also in response to finding connections that respond to individual needs.
- Connectors need to be embedded in the local community. They need to be local and place based, and responsive to local needs.

Working alongside and augmenting Better Futures, we also saw the impact of the dedicated community connector role and how it was critical in gaining access to new networks and connections, and for finding the unique and individual connections that were both meaningful for the young person and mutually beneficial.



It was also important in directly supporting case managers and young people in the connection process, including when case managers found it difficult to invest in the time needed due to competing priorities. Long term the aim should be for this role to be shared, such that community connection becomes an integrated part of any leaving care plan (or any care plan) in the same way health or housing might be and builds capacity and understanding across the service system and community. Over time this could include:

- Involving carers and encouraging them to support and make links, in a similar way that parents would support their child to link to and into community in order to further their interests. For example, supporting the young person to join a sporting clubs or helping them to find opportunities for work experience. In the short to medium term, the connection function could consider how it raises awareness of carers of the importance of connections and what support they need.
- It could also include working with case managers to bring carers into the Advantage Thinking process, and ensure that carers understand and are aware of the strengths, goals and passions of the young person.
- Involving other organisations at an earlier stage to assist the connection pathways. For example, through local government, TAFE, schools or universities to actively participate in case planning. This raises questions as to how these organisations are or should be funded for this type of work.

There is also interest in:

- Documenting the roles, responsibilities, skills and capabilities of the community connector role to support its replication
- Exploring app based and other approaches to streamline and facilitate the engagement of community groups and individuals, and which supports sharing of community connection networks and knowledge
- Building the framework and mechanisms for accessing resources and supports through the Corporate Social Responsibility agendas of the private sector.

Recommendation 3:

That a dedicated community connector role be recognised and adequately resourced as a key and core service component within the Out of Home and Leaving care suite of services at the subregional level as a minimum. This role will focus on building the network of community connections and availability of local social capital to those in and leaving OoHC. It will:

- Bring community members together for networking, training, support and further awareness raising.
- Provide flexible supports that respond to the community's capacity to engage and every young person's needs.
- Promote and highlight opportunities within organisations and community networks (including through sharing good news and lived experience stories).

3.5 Collaborative Governance

The collaborative governance arrangements emerged from the Outer East Child and Youth Area Partnership (OECYAP) and provided a mechanism for intentionally bringing key players together, including those who were not traditionally involved in OoHC, to jointly plan and respond to the needs of young people transitioning from OoHC in the Outer East.

The impact has been that:

Partner and Community Organisations have learnt how to collaborate in a meaningful and productive way, including with each other, young people and carers, and are understanding the value and potential of this collaboration. The Brighter Futures partnership has brought new resources and opportunities to the Outer East and can provide a mechanism to do so into the future (Impact 13).

The practice of bringing the “unusual suspects” to the table is terrific; Brighter Futures has shown that there is so much untapped potential out there. The collective impact approach has been another strength – how can community, government (different tiers), business, philanthropy and most importantly young people, all work together to build connections for care leavers? (DHHS, survey)

Over the life of the Pilot, the changes to the collaborative governance arrangements have been mostly affected by external factors – the cessation of the statewide CYAP and subsequently the OECYAP, changes in the policy environment and the Pilot’s commissioning framework.

With the exception of the significant change to the actual governance mechanisms, the Pilot continued in the way it started. The inclusion of young people in the co-design exercise was an early shift in the practice of the OECYAP, and despite the ebbing and flowing of the youth voice it also set the scene for this practice throughout.

The five years of collaborative work before the commencement of the Pilot provided a solid foundation.

The partnership has been challenged by the lack of a strong formal authorising environment, including to get buy in for changing practice within the service system. With the cessation of the OECYAP the Brighter Futures Executive was formed to assume strategic governance responsibilities, including ongoing engagement of stakeholders beyond the OoHC system. Importantly it included community organisations, the lead agencies responsible for delivery, lived experience positions and a carer. The Pilot Control Group (PCG) of lead agencies provided day to day operational support.

Through the Executive and PCG the collaboration has retained strong internal leadership for the Pilot activities. However, there is a sense that opportunities for the collective identification of issues and new problem solving have reduced and/or are more difficult without the formal authorising environment that existed with the OECYAP and the strategic level engagement and discussion it promoted.

The backbone support function has emerged as critical to supporting the collaboration and keeping partner organisations engaged and involved. The role provides drive and leadership and the Pilot has benefitted from the continuous involvement of a highly skilled operator. This role has:

- Ensured strong relationships have been built and maintained within the Pilot and externally.
- Ensured all stakeholders involved are valued, heard and are given opportunities to contribute to the development of the Pilot.
- Kept the focus on the experience of young people transitioning from OoHC.
- Been critical in harnessing the learnings, opportunities, challenges from the Pilot and building on them.

Across the lifespan of the Pilot, the backbone support function has supported the partnership to embed core elements of the Collective Impact Framework, which has itself developed significantly since emerging in 2011. Table 2 outlines major iterations of the Collective Impact Framework, released in 2011 and 2016 respectively, and how core elements have been expressed through the Brighter Futures Pilot.

Table 2: Collective Impact Framework

Core Elements of Collective Impact (2011)	Core Elements of Collective Impact 3.0* (2016)	How Core Elements have been expressed via the Brighter Futures Pilot
Common Agenda	Community Aspiration	Government, service providers and community have a shared and aspirational vision for change that cannot be achieved via business as usual
Shared Learning	Strategic Learning	Culture of reflective practice and developmental evaluation supports continuous improvement and accountability across the partnership
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	High Leverage Activities	Diverse partners are empowered to undertake activities that pursue the collective vision from unique and varied positions within the broader system (e.g. policy change, community awareness raising and advocacy)
Continuous Communication	Inclusive Community Engagement	Community, carers and young people with lived experience of OoHC are placed at the centre of the Pilot model and leadership is distributed among all partners
Backbone Support	Containers for Change	Collaborative effort is prioritised and resourced with an intentional focus on cultural and mindset change, as well as the more tangible aspects of collaboration (e.g. vision creation and shared measurement)

*See Cabaj M and Weaver L, Collective Impact 3.0: An Evolving Framework for Community Change <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/sites/default/files/Collective%20Impact%203.0.pdf>

This important strategic role has moved beyond the usual backbone function of (skilled) coordination, and the Executive is aware that it is important that moving forward the drive for change will need to continue. A renewed investment from Government to support collaboration would cement the gains made, building and expanding on its existing foundations and assist in ensuring its future.

The statewide roll out of Better Futures as a new mode for leaving care services created new challenges. The Brighter Futures collective brought people together to explore the impact of change and how to address and accommodate the new approach. It was successful in influencing the guidelines for the community connection part of Better Futures, and negotiated for Brighter Futures to augment the Better Future services offering in the Outer East.

The Brighter Futures partnership can see an opportunity for it and Better Futures to continue to leverage from each other's efforts. Most significantly this includes for the latter to benefit from the Brighter Futures collaborative efforts which share the responsibility for OoHC leavers with the community and the broader service system. However, it is recognised that this would require a significant shift in practice from within DHHS, particularly in relation to involving stakeholders beyond the OoHC system in governance arrangements.

Recommendation 4:

That the stakeholders involved in this Pilot, including funders, Community Services Organisations and community members advocate to Government for investment in local level collaboration and commit to sharing the responsibility for improving outcomes for young people with the community and the broader service system. This includes in relation to the oversight and implementation of Better Futures.

4. CONCLUSION

The Brighter Futures Pilot set a transformation agenda – changing the mindsets about young people transitioning from OoHC, including those who provide the support and for the young people themselves. It aimed not to be an additional service or program, but to alter existing practice to provide hope and a better future for young people.

After twenty months, Brighter Futures success is evident in how the young people who have engaged in the process have valued and benefitted from their connection experiences. Its multifaceted and multipronged approach has created a common language and mindset, and is showing tangible outcomes being achieved by and for the young people.

Its impact is also evident in the way case managers have embraced Advantaged Thinking and their desire to make a difference, in the many examples of young people feeling more confident and empowered in themselves and a community willingly providing opportunities for young people transitioning from OoHC.

It has demonstrated the value of investing in the building of community connections and how this taps into a well of resource and opportunity, and in turn creates mutually beneficial outcomes for all involved. The community connector role has emerged as critical to facilitating and supporting this function.

The Pilot has also showed how collective impact and co-design can lead to better outcomes for practitioners, services and service users, but that it requires both systemic and organisational investment. Organisations are starting to learn how to better support and enable young people to lead and create change as equal partners, and explore the systems and structures that are needed to make it happen.

The cultural transformations are a work in progress, and the challenge is now to maintain the momentum, to build on these significant early successes and embed the change in and across the service system.



ATTACHMENT A – Challenges and learnings by stream

Challenges/ Barriers	What worked	What's happening now
Youth Leadership		
Learning how to do co-design; supporting young people to be leaders and co-designers rather than advocates.	Valuing and acknowledging the role of young people in the process. Providing relevant training; continuing to provide opportunities to be involved	Some partner organisations starting to think about how to embed youth voice within their organisation; and creating a broader role for young people with a lived experience
Youth Ambassadors not connecting with young people transitioning from care as much as they would have liked through the Pilot	Understanding that young people can find it difficult to engage, requiring an adaptive approach	Acknowledgement of the need to explore how to support the YAs to do this differently and more often
Practice and Culture Change		
One to one coaching support for practice change was difficult to sustain	Group reflective practice sessions held in locations close to where people work	Group reflective practices and one to one coaching are continuing
Communicating across multiple organisations and sharing practice (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IT solutions to provide a platform for sustaining open sharing and communications (i.e. Trello) Community of Practice (A) CCs hot desking at POs to build relationships and increase referrals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities of Practice in person and supported by IT solutions (Trello) for sharing tools and resources Shared problem solving and networking approach, PC networks feel that they can rely on each other for support and resources (B) Continued hot desking of CCs at POs
Influencing people who are not of a similar mindset regarding values and approaches of AT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying people who were of a similar mindset and shared values to be leaders. Continued promotion of the benefits and outcomes being achieved/ building on successes Reflective practice within the workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition that change takes time; continuing with what works. Thinking about/ starting to plan for how to maintain the momentum.
Building consistency in the approach for the young person across all aspects of their life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key players and supports; providing opportunities for training and sharing resources. PCs interact with other workers and programs in an AT way (leading and demonstrating). Promoting the benefits and outcomes of the program. 	AT resources are being shared and made available outside the program Influencing/ challenging practice in other orgs (eg: referral forms to require DHHS child protection to identify strengths, goals and passions)
Underestimating the difficulties in young people completing forms and having conversations about their goals, ideal connections and pathways (A)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising that it takes more time to “dig” deeper (A) Focusing on engagement and persevering Having a “team” capacity in organisations to provide continuity for the young person over time 	Community Connectors supporting a team based approach between young person, case manager and community connection – including to provide support around goals and strengths where this is difficult for the case manager to do and responding to referrals in the absence of a practice lead.
Balancing immediate needs (eg: housing) with aspirational goals	Give the young person the support and time to “feel” that they can dream beyond what the service system tells them.	Some case managers making links between meeting immediate needs and achieving longer term goals.

ATTACHMENT A - continued

Challenges/ Barriers	What worked	What's happening now
Case managers with high caseloads and difficulties finding time to engage in BF work, and working within restrictive program guidelines, eg: restricting access when a person turns 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognising that middle management were part of the solution to support practice change within the constraints of the existing environment. Being creative and thinking about different ways of doing business Finding ways to record the young person's voice or make it present, even when they were unable to there 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BF Leaving Care Working Group was formed. Regular meeting for team leaders and middle managers and promotes understanding of the BF components and implementing change. Sharing ideas and tools through CoP to address issues Some organisations developing supportive cultures and authorisation to work differently; changing internal tools/ systems to incorporate AT
Staff leaving and staff changes. Maintaining the momentum & responding to growing interest in the Pilot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Being able to organise small additional training sessions to respond to interest to becoming a practice champion PCs finding the work personally satisfying Shared vision/ language developed through shared learning 	Considering options for ongoing training Team approach so that others can step in (ie: when someone away)
Community Connection		
Community was an untapped resource	Community Connector role Promoting voice of Youth Ambassadors	Continued evolution of Community Connector role Exploring opportunities
Getting the referral process right	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and changing as required At the beginning limiting the number of referrals to ensure a manageable case load (and responsiveness) and restricting referrals to only case managers who had undertaken the training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible eligibility criteria Referrals are open to any case manager (maximising opportunities)
Not all case managers operating in an advantage thinking way/ understanding community development and social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenging the status quo; asking why and why not. Promoting and raising awareness of the benefits of connections Key messaging asking people to reflect on own/families experience in connecting with community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community connectors continue to promote connections; work with case managers (hot desking in different organisations to make making a connection easier) Augmenting Better Futures by providing support for community connection outcome area.
Ensuring that organisations/connections are "child safe"	Requiring WWC and criminal record checks for all connections as well as checking credentials of organisations	WWC and criminal checks part of standard practice

ATTACHMENT A - continued

Challenges/ Barriers	What worked	What's happening now
Finding meaningful and relevant connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having skilled operators who are confident in seeking and asking for connections. Where appropriate/ necessary supporting the young person and case manager to persevere with AT and identify strengths, goals and passions to identify an appropriate connection. Being opportunistic, community connectors being embedded in community and maintaining visibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Connectors are embedded in the local community and actively finding new connections and opportunities. Community Connectors are supporting young people (where required), complementing case manager support, to assist them in the connection process. Community Connectors are concentrating on the how, what, when and who. Identification of community based connectors – people in community who act as natural connection hubs.
Understanding the benefit of the connection for its intrinsic benefit not just to achieve a particular purpose.	Case managers seeing the benefits of connections to the young person's wellbeing	Community connectors continue to promote connections
Supporting community	Taking a flexible approach to providing support to community. Understanding different levels of readiness and ability to connect	Training packages are available (but community is often willing and able to connect without)
Case manager workloads not prioritising connection work	Community connectors being able to step in and up to support the young person	Community Connectors are supporting young people (where required), complementing case manager support, to assist them in the connection process.
Collaborative Governance		
<p>Adapting to changes in the "authorising" environment, including the cessation of the OECYAP partnership. (A,B)</p> <p>Impacted on authorising environment and accountability lines (particularly to engage senior departmental leadership and influence policy change)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, supporting the OECYAP partnership as a steering committee to provide guidance and support. Rethinking who needed to be around the table to drive and steer the partnership. Having philanthropy involved which meant Brighter Futures continued. Having the PCG in place to provide "backbone" support to the operation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Executive Group (a subset of the original steering committee) and Project Control Group support the communications between all organisations involved in the Pilot. Aside from the lead organisations, often the most committed to a new way of working are those not from the OoHC sector. The Executive Group meet monthly, and the control group fortnightly (or as required). The control group membership is the lead agencies, and the meeting allows for the coordination and close monitoring of the activities.
Coordination at the partnership level requires significant effort and resources.	Support of a central coordinator for strategic leadership and operational support to the partner organisations.	Backbone support function is providing both strategic and operational capacity to the Pilot.

ATTACHMENT A - continued

Challenges/ Barriers	What worked	What's happening now
Getting the contract management arrangements right. The lead agency is responsible for providing and managing several sub-contracts which is difficult to reconcile with collaborative practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing to encourage a collaborative approach, reminding parties of the end product, and the need to contribute to streams of work for which they are not lead (i.e. emphasising the inter-relationship between streams of work) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BF Executive have a greater understanding of their role in supporting the lead organisation to manage sub-contracts from a governance perspective, particularly when issues arise.
Changing policy directions including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new service delivery frameworks for Brighter Future stakeholders to work within. (A, B) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing people together to explore the impact of the change and how best to collaborate with Better Futures (A) Thinking about what a high quality system would look like from a young person's perspective; challenge distractions within the system that may work against achieving this (A) Working with DHHS central office to integrate learnings from BF Pilot into the Better Futures model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better Futures has incorporated many of the learnings/values of Brighter Futures. Better and Brighter Future staff are learning from each other (N) Explore opportunities for streamlining and leverage effort but need to address the lack of engagement of community stakeholders and make community con
Brighter Futures being seen as a program rather than approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrating the benefits of mindset and cultural change at an organisation and system level, as well as delivering individual level outcomes for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication Strategy (information, advocacy)
Challenging deficit focused narratives (B)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating consistency across all platforms/ organisations Having conversations with community groups and individuals using strengths based narrative Development of a training package for community members Training in positive psychology for the YAs Practice champions talking with other people in their team and providing direction Community connectors modelling and supporting the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AT providing a framework and language for discussions and conversations, and a way of working across practice. Youth Ambassadors/ youth talking about what they can and want to achieve and what they have to offer, rather than what is going wrong. While community training is available, many community members and organisations do not need it and feel ready and are able to engage quickly. Staying flexible; keeping the young person at the centre of decision making.

ATTACHMENT B - Supporting documentation

A	BF Transformational Pilot Bennelong Report	April 2019
B	Final version of BF Transformation Report to the Funded 2019	July 2019
C	Out of Home Care Funders Group Update	July 2019
D	CYAP change stories template	June 2019
E	CYAP – case study – final draft June 201	June 2019
F	BFTP transformations and quotes	May 2019
G	BFTP one year on	May 2019
H	BFTP key learnings	May 2019
I	BFTP culture and systems change	March 2019
J	Better Futures Community Connections – Practice Advice (draft)	Late 2019
K	Brighter Futures Executive Meeting Collaborative Activity notes	March 2020
L	Brighter Future quotes – why do we work	November 2019
M	Team leaders and managers meeting – collaborative activity notes	March 2020
N	Conversation with BSL	April 2020
O	Interview with Practice Champion (as part of formal evaluation)	April 2020
P	Interview with lived experience worker	April 2020
Q	Interview with BF Executive (1)	April 2020

Abbreviations

AT – Advantaged Thinking

PC – Practice Champion

PO – Partnering Organisation OS - Survey

CO – Community Organisation

PCG – Pilot Control Group

YP – Young Person

OoHC – Out of Home Care