

## ACE AfterCare South West Sydney and Southern Regions

### Contact details

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**Hours of service:** Monday to Friday: 9.00am to 5.00pm.  
*There is flexibility around this dependent on the needs of the young person.*

**Coordinator:** Rossana Creighton      **Manager:** Susan Chapman

**Manager Operations:** Anthea Jackson      **Director:** Vivien Tait

### About the program

ACE AfterCare began in 1997 and provides Leaving Care and After Care support to young people aged 15 to 25 years who have been in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) or who are preparing to leave OOHC.

ACE AfterCare provides an outreach casework support service covering the South West Sydney and Southern Region of NSW. We work collaboratively with the young person to support their life goals and provide assistance to support their transition to independence. The young people who participate in our program do so voluntarily and we work within a strengths-based, goal-orientated solution focused framework.

The service in the South West Sydney Region covers the local Community Service Centre areas of Bankstown, Bowral, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Liverpool and Ingleburn.

The service in the Southern Region of NSW covers the local Community Service Centre areas of Wollongong, Shellharbour, Nowra and Ulladulla.

Services are free to young people who wish to participate in the program.

### Eligibility

ACE AfterCare provides support and other services including referrals, case management and brokerage to young people aged between 15 to 25 years who have been in OOHC for longer than three months and who are residing in the South West Sydney and Southern Region of NSW.

## **Objectives**

To increase the long-term safety, welfare and wellbeing of young people who are preparing to leave OOHC or who have left OOHC, by providing appropriate support and resources to meet their needs, including:

- access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services.
- enabling Indigenous young people to gain access to identified community groups
- improving the young person's links with a range of other agencies that may assist the young person in stabilisation and integration into the community
- increasing community-based supports and relationships with peers and significant others
- improving the young person's living skills while increasing their ability to live independently
- assisting young people with securing stable accommodation
- providing financial assistance to young people according to their needs and in line with Community Services' Financial Guidelines and UnitingCare Burnside's Brokerage Policy
- assisting with young people's general health and wellbeing
- assisting and referring young people to access appropriate services including counselling when needed
- assisting and referring young people who wish to further their education
- assisting and referring young people to services that may provide vocational and employment opportunities
- assisting young people to obtain legal services if and when required.

## **Referral**

Referrals come from Community Services, other OOHC providers, self referrals, Foster Carers, Residential Care Programs, Government and Non-Government service providers.

## **Services**

We provide young people an individually tailored service within a case management framework, to meet their needs and assist them towards a successful transition to independence. A plan is developed with the young person that includes their strengths, goals and the resources needed to achieve these goals.

## **Funding**

ACE AfterCare is funded by Community Services, Department of Human Services NSW.

## **Key facts**

The program was established as a result of the poor outcomes for young people leaving OOHC and the lack of supports available for these young people once they left OOHC. The Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 Chapter 8 Part 6 outlines arrangements on leaving OOHC. This includes

the Minister being required to provide or arrange assistance for children and young people 15 to 25 years who leave OOH in regard to their safety, welfare and well being.

## **Young person's perspective:**

### ***Mary's story***

*Imagine being blind, just for a minute, stumbling around in darkness – disorientated, very afraid and completely alone. That was how I felt when my lease ran out at the place I was living in.*

*Imagine being 19, just out of care, pregnant, with no means of support, not knowing how to survive without stability in your life. Close to giving up, my foster parents off-handedly gave me a piece of paper with a name, address and a phone number on it. The name was ACE AfterCare. I suddenly felt a bit of hope that maybe someone would care about what I was going through, and maybe, just maybe, they would help.*

*I booked an appointment and made my way to UnitingCare Burnside. I was greeted by the friendliest people I'd ever met in my life. They sat down with me and actually listened to what I had to say. They offered me advice and gave me information about leaving care. They told me as a Ward of the State, when I reached the age of 18, or left care, I was entitled to certain things through Community Services.*

*It was the first I'd ever heard of it. I was allocated a caseworker who, to this very day, I still think is an angel. She provided me with emotional support, helped me with monetary problems, put stability back in my life by finding me a place to live and gave me back my hope for the future.*

*Being pregnant so young was hard and with very little experience and so small an income, I didn't really have the means to provide a suitable living environment for a child. The ACE team and Community Services set me up with a cot, pram, much needed baby things and helped prepare me for the day he came into the world.*

*When my son was born, they visited me in hospital and even drove me home when I was discharged. To have emotional support and people that care so much about a person's wellbeing is a blessing. The members of ACE really do want the best for every client.*

*Always willing to help out, always willing listen, I don't want to imagine what my life would have been like without them. But what I do realise is this, what could have been me, out on the streets alone, hungry, is still someone else's reality.*

*Who cares?  
ACE cares!*