

Continuing care for young people: What works from the perspective of staff and young people?



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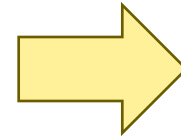
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Research Question

What resources do young people draw on during the 12 months after leaving Youth AOD treatment?

- AOD services
- Safe housing, food, phones
- Quality care from staff
- Bonds with families, mentoring adults, peers
- Specific knowledges and skills acquired and learned



Method

Study 1: Longitudinal cohort study over 12 months n=38 young people (n~80)

Study 2: Case study using in-depth interviews

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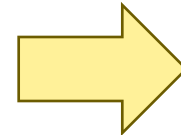
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Aim:



What *program structures, mechanisms and practices* work to keep young people engaged and sufficiently resourced after leaving treatment?



Study 2 Method

- Qualitative interviews 11 clients and 9 staff (n=20)

Continuing Adolescent Life Management program:

- 13-18 years
- former clients of PALM Residential program for youth
- daily, weekly, monthly or occasional contact
- purposeful focus on maintaining contact and engagement



Results: Five main program mechanisms

1. Person-centered counselling approaches
2. Staff-client relationship stability
3. Safety and inclusion
4. Offering intervention at clients' preferred order and pace
5. Organisational memory

1. Person-centred counselling approaches



- Effective styles of communication and relating
- Unconditional positive regard

It doesn't matter what you're doing ... if you're consistent ... with your approach to the young person, you're always treating them with unconditional, positive regard. It doesn't matter if they call you a dickhead like, you know ... "I'm gonna work with my client," that means it doesn't matter what happens ... But they know that they can come to you, and you always treat them the same ... (Staff 9, Management)



2. Staff-client relationship stability

- Established quickly
- Straight-up, plain style with boundaries
- Model positive adult interaction
- Staff qualities of dependability, care, discretion, positivity, being undeterred

Our staff have got a fantastic ability to be very straight-up with them... they've got good boundaries and ... which the young people actually really appreciate ... if you're very straight-forward with the young people, that's the way they prefer it. They feel safe because, you know, they grow up with people that they're really not sure what they're thinking and what's gonna happen next.

(Staff 3, Management)



3. Safety and inclusion

- Challenging homophobia
- Referring to culturally specific supports
- Collaborating with services in regional areas
- Challenge that most staff from dominant cultural backgrounds

... they've got a good team there that, you know, looks after all the young people. It's a safe space, culturally, and for the queer community ... and it's ... like a very safe space for me. Like I felt really comfortable ... to go there and, even though I'm not in that program anymore, like I'll still go in and say hello ... [later] [CALM] set me up for a lot of things and kept me connected with culture and education, and all things that I didn't have ... beforehand. (Jarrah, former client, 25)

4. Offering intervention at clients' preferred order and pace



- Build tangible skills aligned with desired futures
- Staff worked hard to address service fragmentation

In CALM I think it should be about, yes, getting them into education and a driver's licence, and bank account. Like they're the essentials. But, also, helping them find their spark.

(Staff 2, Frontline).

the CALM team really like tried to get me engaged on the things I wanted to do in life. Like that's the only reason I have like the life I have now is because they helped me sort out the kind of world I wanted to put myself in, and my caseworker got me enrolled in TAFE.

(Former client, 19)



5. Organisational memory

- 'the way we do things here'
- Training and mentoring
- Threatened by complicated and insecure funding arrangements

Funding is always something that's ... at the back of your mind ... And, you know, that's one thing where we're constantly worrying about ... and, also, being able to have like longevity because right now in the role ... it does sort of boil down to funding and the number of personnel that we can put in ...

(Staff 9, Management)

Summary and implications



Specific needs of young people

- Unique importance of *unconditional positive regard* for young people who value autonomy
- Stable and dependable relationships with adults

Online Seminar

What have we learned about the AOD continuing care needs of young people?

We invite professional and clinical staff from the Australian AOD sector to a free online seminar presenting findings from the *Resource Landscapes for Young People Exiting Residential Care* project. This research followed 38 young people in Victoria, NSW, and ACT over 12 months to document the resources that mattered most in managing substance use and building positive trajectories.

Date: Tuesday 26th November, 2024

Time: 2:00pm – 3:30pm

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://unsw.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYlduCsqDorHdIXpx7Bkbjwkb6L3eeXSF98>

