



A unique relationship puts Corey on the path to reach his potential

For young people who've spent time in out-of-home care, building trusting relationships with adults can take time.

Jesuit Social Services' Community Connections Mentoring program matches these young people with a volunteer mentor to help them transition into adulthood. Corey, a young person who received mentoring through the program, says his mentor Sean has supported him to work towards his potential.

"He's given me lots of advice and helped me keep my goals in mind. If I say I want to get something done, he'll be on my back about it," Corey laughs.

Corey was in residential care for two years. When he left care, he was matched with Sean. "I was not in a good way... Sean helped me prioritise all [the] stuff I needed to get sorted," Corey says.

Due to difficult family circumstances young people like Corey may not always have ongoing relationships with adults they trust. Their relationship with a volunteer mentor is different.

Sean explains, "In the beginning I had to remind Corey that I wasn't a worker. That I wasn't being held to account by a

system of case management and supervision. We could build a slightly different relationship working together than I would have in a more professional setting."

Corey agrees. "It was different. It was more like having a friend. Someone that can help you out, talk to you. Help you push for better things."

Sean is committed to supporting Corey without imposing his own ideas about the path Corey should take. "I try to encourage Cory to work on his own independence and what he sees as important to him."

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45 years of standing in solidarity with those on the margins

This year marks the 45th Anniversary of Jesuit Social Services. Throughout the year, we have had an opportunity to reflect on our beginnings in 1977, providing housing and other supports for young people exiting the justice system, including through the story of John, one of our original participants who now shares his personal journey with a variety of audiences through our Just Voices speakers program.

While Jesuit Social Services has grown enormously in terms of size and scope since our humble beginnings, what has not changed over 45 years is our commitment to seeking solutions to help marginalised people and communities to reach their potential.

When Four Flats began in 1977, there weren't other services supporting people exiting the justice system and helping them to get their lives back on track. Today, we still provide a range of programs and services to adults and young people to prevent crime from occurring in the first place and, when people do have contact with the justice system, to help them to lead more productive and healthy lives.

In recent years, our work has expanded to now span six key streams of activity, including gender justice and ecological justice which we are led through The Men's Project and our Centre for Just Places, both of which have been established in the past few years.

In this newsletter, you will read about some of the ways we continue to support people with multiple and complex needs, people who have experienced the out-of-home care system, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Your support remains vital as we continue to build a just society. We hope we can meet in person with you at our Annual Dinner on 25th March 2023 – our first annual dinner since 2019!

In the meantime, I wish you and your loved ones a safe and happy Christmas.

Warm regards,

Julie Edwards
CEO, Jesuit Social Services

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The program runs for a year but volunteers and mentors are encouraged to continue their relationship independently. Sean and Cory continue to meet up.

"I've spent quite a long time with Corey. We've got to know each other very well and both enjoy each other's company. I didn't think I would enjoy it as much as I do," Sean says.

Kiandra, Senior Project Officer with the program, says the way Corey and Sean work together inspires her.

"All young people in out-of-home care have experienced some sort of trauma growing up. They don't have an ideal family situation... That's why it's really good that this is a long-term program with a volunteer who wants to help the young person reach their potential.

I know Corey is getting something genuine, and something that you can't buy. That relationship with a volunteer is special."



Corey is a participant in our Community Connections Mentoring program

Police pathway program gives Zahra the opportunity to achieve her dream

Zahra dreamed of becoming a police officer as a child in Pakistan, following in her father's footsteps.

Despite her father's encouragement, patriarchal social expectations initially set her on a different path, towards a teaching career and motherhood — until, after moving to Australia, her husband Mohammad saw a post in their online community group for the Victoria Police Diversity Recruitment Program.

"When we came here, we saw the opportunity," Zahra said.

In June, the pair became the first married couple to successfully complete the course, which supports candidates from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to navigate the rigorous Victoria Police recruitment process.

Delivered by Victoria University in partnership with Jesuit Social Services, the 15-week course aims to increase the cultural diversity of Victoria's police force, to better reflect and represent the diverse Victorian community it serves.

Since its inception in 2018, 132 students from 47 countries have successfully graduated from the program. 58 have passed the Victoria Police entrance exam, and 22 now serve as members of the force.

"It wasn't easy, but we learnt a lot," said Zahra of the course, which included three nights of classes per week covering core topics and skills for the entrance exam, fitness, and first aid testing.

With Zahra's background as a maths and science teacher and a master's degree in physics, some subjects were straightforward, and others — including swimming, abstract reasoning, and the mock entrance exams — more challenging, but ultimately rewarding.

"I could never imagine I would be able to pass the mock exam, so I'm very happy; very proud," she said.

"Our program has been designed from the outset to break down barriers to participation in the Victoria Police recruitment process, to ultimately set people up for a successful lifelong career where they can reach their full potential and give back to community, either as an individual or in this case, as a family," said Jesuit Social

Services' Relationships and Operations Manager Kate Wadsworth, who coordinates the program.

"Under expanded eligibility, we can now support applicants from across Victoria, including regional communities, from all culturally diverse communities under-represented within the Victoria Police workforce."

Representing and protecting their culturally diverse community is why Mohammad and Zahra want to one day work with Victoria Police.

"You become a police officer because you want to be part of the solution," Mohammad said.

"We're here, we call Australia our home, and as a resident the foremost job is to make sure the community is safe and the people who live here are safe."



Mohammad and Zahra are working hard to become police officers through the Victoria Police Diversity Recruitment Program.

Raising the age of criminal responsibility

Jesuit Social Services has a proud history of both 'doing' and 'influencing'. We work to support people in immediate need (our doing work) and we also advocate to change policies, practices and attitudes in order to create a just society (our influencing work).

To help achieve this, we have a small team of policy staff working across the locations where we deliver services – Victoria, New South Wales and Northern Territory. This allows us to respond flexibly to policy and advocacy needs in all three jurisdictions, as well as to national issues.

One key piece of advocacy that is critical to Jesuit Social Services, and something that is relevant to each and every jurisdiction across Australia, is raising the age of criminal responsibility.

Raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years has been a key policy focus for Jesuit Social Services for almost a decade, and 2022 has seen us increase our advocacy to achieve this goal. We were pleased to provide a submission recently to the Northern Territory's Attorney General's Department on this issue. In our submission, we called for the Government to listen to the large body of evidence that exists in supporting raising the age of criminal responsibility. We also highlighted a range of evidence-based responses that can support children aged under 14, including intensive family support and Group Conferencing.

The United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child has been clear in its recommendation to Australian States and Territories to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years. Local and international research shows clearly that brain development continues well into the mid 20s. A child under the age of 14 is less able to consider the consequences of their actions and is more likely to act impulsively and engage in risk taking behaviours.

Across Australia, most children who are incarcerated under the age of 14 are Aboriginal children. In 2020-2021, 94 per cent of young people in detention in the Northern Territory identified as Aboriginal. We urged the Government to be a leader on this reform that will transform outcomes for Aboriginal children and families, and our whole community.

In October 2022 the Northern Territory Government formally introduced legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years in line with recommendations of Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children. We were pleased to see the Government take these initial steps however it is import that the related recommendation – that no child under 14 be held in detention – also be implemented as soon as possible.

In the meantime, Jesuit Social Services will continue to advocate strongly at both a local and national level to ensure the age of criminal responsibility is raised to 14 across our country.

Setting a better path for a teen in trouble

When a 14-year-old boy named Luke broke into Dave Hammond's house and stole his car, he could have faced a punitive response simply designed to punish a young person for their actions with little consideration of the circumstances that led to their behaviour.

But on this occasion things were different. Dave – who was previously the General Manager of Jesuit Social Services' Western Sydney programs – and Luke both agreed to participate in a group conference, a process designed to repair harm and restore relationships rather than simply punish bad choices.

"He didn't pinch the car because he was a nasty kid," Dave said.

"That doesn't justify it. But it was in very difficult circumstances."

Dave and his wife joined Luke and his support person in the Youth Justice Group Conference, which is a facilitated dialogue between people who have offended, those impacted by their actions, and the wider community.

The program aims to divert young people from further or more serious offending.

For Dave, the conference was both an opportunity to voice his experience of fear and frustration at the theft, and to learn about the difficult circumstances of Luke's life, which included absent parents and having to sleep on the floor.

"To this day, I just feel very sad that he had to live that way. How could you want retribution when the kid's already lived through it?"

Luke was charged over the theft and completed community service hours in addition to the conference.

"There was still a consequence," said Dave, "but that consequence didn't need to include him being hated by us."

The group conference that Dave took part in happened in New South Wales. Group conferencing is also available in Victoria and the Northern Territory, where it is run by Jesuit Social Services. We have consistently advocated for a similar restorative justice process for adults involved with the justice system.

For Dave, his experience with Luke was an opportunity to ask himself what he wanted from the criminal justice system, as both a person impacted by crime and as a member of his wider community.

"That kid has an opportunity, with a bit more support and a bit of help, to become fulfilled as a human being. Isn't that what we want out of a justice system?"

"I would love to see a criminal justice system that ends up building a more trusting, more caring, more productive community."

'Luke's name has been changed to protect his identity.'

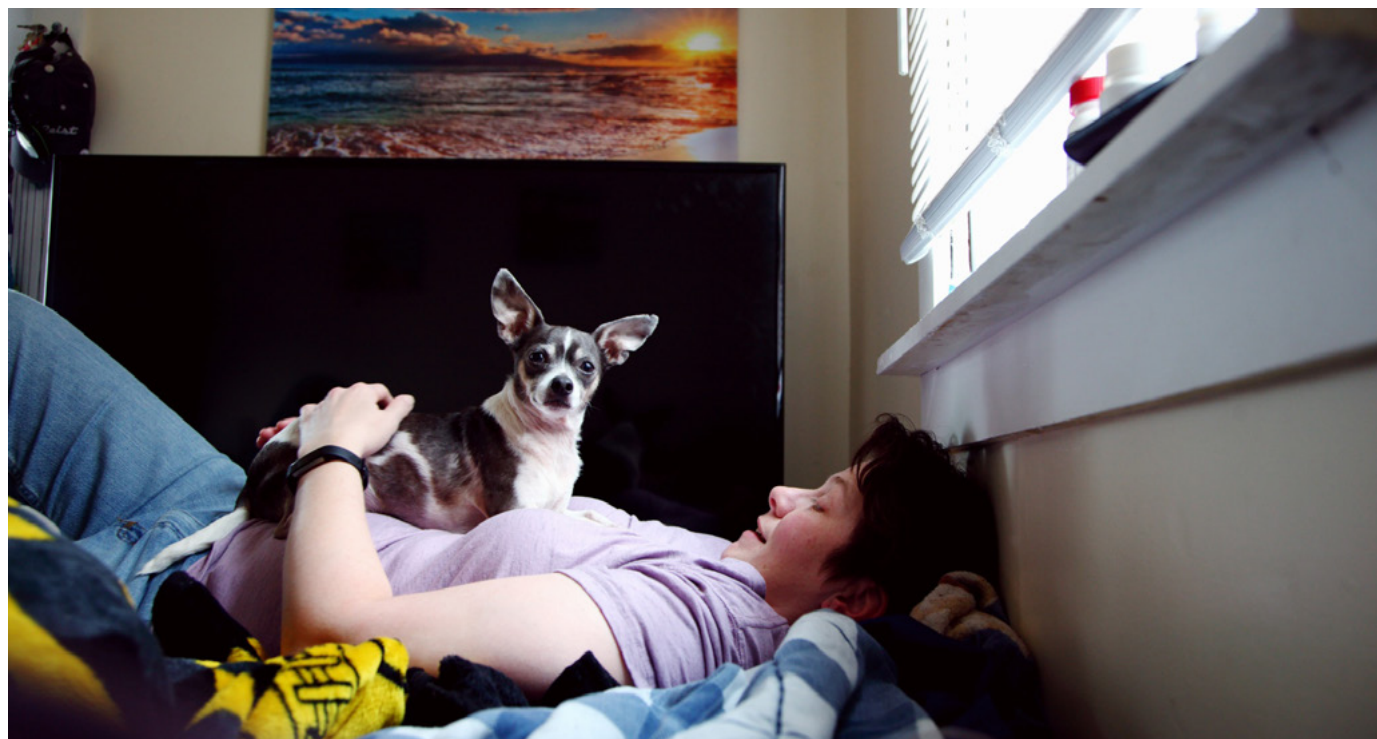


Dave Hammond, restorative justice advocate and community development worker.

This conversation is adapted from our interview with Dave Hammond for the Worth A Second Chance podcast, which calls for a more fair, humane and effective youth justice system.

Listen to the full episode: <https://bit.ly/DaveHammondWASC>

Specialist NDIS support to ease transition from care



When Jesuit Social Services Specialist Support Coordinator, Cherish Clark, first met 17-year-old Allie, she knew she had some challenges to overcome. After living in out-of-home care since the age of 15, Allie was suspicious of service providers and difficult to engage.

"It wasn't hard to understand why Allie initially seemed withdrawn, given the challenges and disappointments she's faced in her young life," said Cherish.

"These tough circumstances intersect with her cognitive and mental health diagnoses, which together present some barriers to Allie living the life she wants and deserves."

Allie has a mild intellectual disability, a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder, and mental health problems, which made her eligible for a support package from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Due to the complexity of Allie's needs, she was provided with funding for Specialist Support Coordination in her NDIS plan – a higher level of support, in which highly skilled and qualified coordinators work with people to address their specific needs and overcome the intersecting barriers to achieving their goals.

Jesuit Social Services was able to provide this level of support, which allowed Cherish time to build rapport with Allie, and to prepare her for what would happen once she exited out-of-home care.

"The key to the success of engaging with Allie was taking time to establish a relationship of trust, in line with Jesuit Social Services' relational way of working," said Cherish.

"Our approach looks at the whole person, including all the interconnected circumstances in someone's life – not just at the diagnosis. I worked with Allie to ensure she understood all services are completely voluntary and gave her a range of service options to facilitate her choice and control throughout the process of her NDIS package."

The period of support before Allie exited out-of-home care also created an opportunity for Cherish to build relationships with selected NDIS service providers, which ensured Allie had wraparound supports and a sense of stability and safety as she prepared for this transitional stage of her life. Cherish connected Allie with allied health services, and explored opportunities for housing, employment and family reunification support, in line with the goals she had set for herself.

As Allie takes her first steps into an independent life as a young adult, her NDIS support package is one resource available to her as she moves further towards achieving her personal goals.

Our work

Over the past 45 years, we have worked tirelessly at the hard end of social justice. To do this work, we've always needed support. Support from people like you who share our vision of building a just society.

We are grateful to everyone who donates, volunteers, attends our events, or participates in our advocacy initiatives. Everything adds up. Thank you!

Here is just a snapshot of the impact you've been a part of:



1,418



people supported through our Justice and Crime Prevention programs

2,530



people supported through our Settlement and Community Building programs

5,963



people supported through our Education, Training and Employment programs

2,599



people supported through our Mental Health and Wellbeing programs

75%

of program participants had an improved view of self after 12 months support



1,245



people attended a Jesuit Social Services event, including our 5th National Justice Symposium

1,482



people contributed to our social justice campaigns, the Catholic Alliance for People seeking Asylum (CAPSA), and Worth a Second Chance

Your help is essential as we carry on with this important job. We appreciate everything you do.

Without you, this work would be impossible.

To learn more about what you've helped us achieve in the past year, download our 2021-22 Annual Report:

<https://jss.org.au/about-us/annual-report/>

SAVE THE DATE

Jesuit Social Services Annual Dinner – 25th March 2023

Mark your calendars for our next Annual Fundraising Dinner!

The event will be held at Q Events in Melbourne's CBD.

After four years of it not being possible to hold this event, we are thrilled to reconnect with you in person.

Our special guest speaker will be announced soon.

We look forward to sending you your official invitation in the New Year.

Help us continue to accompany people on their journeys to a brighter future and offer them the individualised support they need.

Your gift this Christmas can make all the difference.

Want to help Jesuit Social Services?

Together we can build a just society by advocating for social change and promoting the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, family and communities.

I would like to make an ongoing monthly gift of:

\$ (Please specify amount)

I would like to make a one-off donation of:

☐ **\$75** ☐ **\$150**

☐ **\$500** ☐ **\$1000**

☐ **\$** Other amount

☐ Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will.

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