

Aftercare Strategic Overview 2020-21

Make A Difference

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Context

What We Do

Make A Difference (MAD) is a Volunteer driven, non-profit organisation working to ensure better outcomes for vulnerable children in child care institutions across India.

Our vision is that even the most vulnerable children in child care institutions are able to realize long-term outcomes equitable with the middle class. We understand the 'most vulnerable' as children who either do not have a family to support them, or children whose families are unable to provide a safe space for them to grow up in. Many of the child care institutions these children end up in, struggle to address more than infrastructure and basic needs, so Make A Difference focuses on providing these children with additional care and support systems to ensure that they flourish and the cycle of poverty and abandonment is broken.

Our long term aspirational goal is that all children in child care institutions across India are able to achieve a middle-class outcome as adults. We also aim to build solutions that can translate out of the child care institution environment, and influence parenting and development in poverty stricken and disadvantaged communities, to reduce the need for entry into care as well as ensure a more systematic transition out of poverty for children in these demographics.

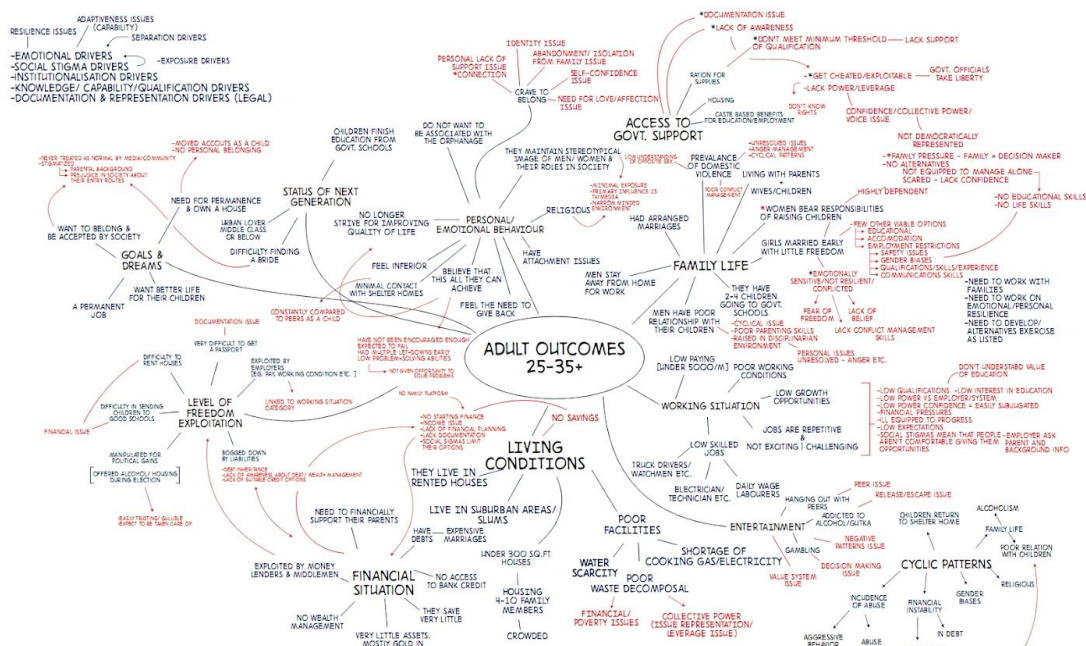
Make A Difference's mission is thus to improve quality of life and ensure long term adult outcomes equitable to the middleThe model is built on the base principles which MAD follows as non-negotiables in all its interventions and these are

1. Individual care and attention for each care leaver
2. High achiever role models in form of volunteers who have good life experience and exposure
3. Safe space for the care leavers to learn and grow in a caring and encouraging environment
4. Personal network for the care leavers in the form of diverse volunteers, care leavers in their Self Support Groups and other care leavers in the programme
5. Long term support through their care leavers and early adult life till they achieve the middle class outcomes
6. Enabling choice is one of the important designs for volunteer intervention with the care leavers. We help care leavers with perspective and help them analyse their choice but at the end we let the final choice be theirs

Primary social challenge we are addressing

According to UNICEF, India is home to the largest child population in the world, with nearly 172m considered to be at risk, including an estimated 35m in need of care and protection. Children at risk in India, whether orphaned and otherwise, often end up in child care institutions, which are under-resourced and often focused more on basic needs than either childcare or longer-term progression. The result is that both quality of life and adult outcomes for children in this demographic are very poor, leading to cycles of poverty and abandonment. With inadequate educational qualifications, life skills, financial or emotional support to cope outside these institutions; children who have grown up in child care institutions often take up menial jobs, or get trapped into alcoholism, violence, drug abuse, prostitution or trafficking.

A challenge we face is that there is very limited information around what happens to children post institutionalization, and the sector appears to have almost no data around the prevalence of different outcomes. The following **adult outcomes map** is the closest approximation we have, based on our working experience of the past 14 years. To take this forward, we have a dedicated Problem Definition research team that is engaged in the primary research necessary to validate our assumptions as well as to provide the prevalence data that is needed to ensure that we are prioritising accurately.



Solutions often struggle with the scale of the problem, and are commonly single dimensional or isolated. This is compounded by the fact that little useful data exists because it has historically been difficult to track what happens to children after they leave child care institutions. Make A Difference exists to address these challenges on both an individual and systemic scale.

Why Aftercare

As an organization, we started tracking outcomes for children beyond their life in Child care institutions. We realised that the lack of support systems, limited exposure, poor social skills and low self confidence are caused by a combination of institutionalisation and limited experience of the world outside the child care institution. The children require both longer term mentoring and financial support to overcome these issues. As it would be for children from any background, the gaps are too wide for an 18 year old to be able to make a smooth transition to the real world by themselves, especially without any personal finances or networks. Getting them into a college or a job is thus not the end of our intervention, but a beginning of a new and more complex real world chapter. In light of this, we initiated a longer term Aftercare program that provides medium touch personal and financial support up to the age of 23, and lighter touch mentoring up to 28.

When Propel(former intervention name for Transition Readiness and Aftercare) started, our dream was to enable the care leavers to forge a sustainable, independent future by helping them in their career paths. The larger dream was to take them and consequently their families out of the vicious cycle of poverty, and thereby ensure that we take a positive step towards Make a Difference's vision of equitable outcomes.

In the first year, a lot of our care leavers secured admissions in colleges and jobs of their choice. However, a lot of them faced challenges that were de-motivating them and/or were making it difficult for them to continue their education or their respective workspaces, from not liking the food or accommodation to not being able to cope with their changes in their social life to struggling to cope up with college curriculum. We realized getting them into courses or jobs was not enough, we need to be able to support them further in order for them to be successfully rehabilitated back in society. Hence the idea of the Aftercare program was born, motivated by on ground needs.

In 2015, we did a mini pilot of this aftercare program with the first batch of care leavers. We started reaching out to them around December 2014. We found a few to be happy, but still in want of things like subject support. Some reached out to their Propel wingmen(Volunteer), who helped to the extent they could, but beyond that did not have a support system in place to satisfy the care leaver's needs to the fullest. Some of them slipped back into the vicious cycles, some dropped out of college and got themselves a job. Some told us they want to make their own future; they will come to us if they need anything. We were unable to trace a few, some were lost, and found, and lost again.

Through all this we realized the importance of a robust Aftercare system, a support system that is available to the care leavers if and when he/she needs it, not imposed on him/her. But the important thing to note is that if and when the care leavers does need support, we need to already have a system that can provide the same. This support system needs to be in place when the care leavers are about to move out of the care and protection of a child care institution, so that there is someone to guide him/her through it, if need be. As most of us have experienced at some points in our life, the initial period of any transition can be the most taxing.

One crucial realization for us was that for this support system to become sustainable, we need to enable the care leavers to support each other, and with time, become independent of MAD.

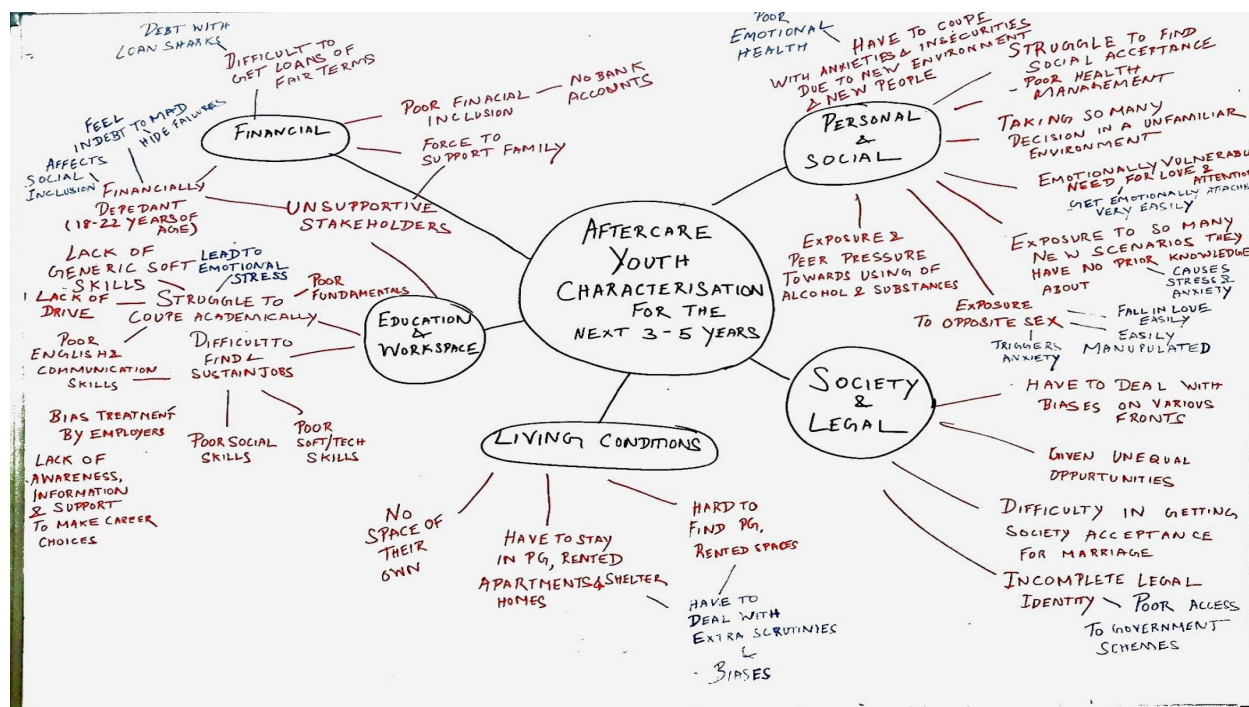
Programme Vision

80+% of children/care leavers moving out of Child care institutions under the Make a Difference programmes are able to realise equitable outcomes and reach the middle class by the age of 35.

Programme Mission

The mission of the Aftercare programme is to provide necessary support to children/care leavers moving out of Child care institutions to ensure they progress towards middle class outcomes.

Characterisation of Aftercare care leavers for at least the next 3 to 5 years



The Aftercare model

Programme outcomes

The goal of the Aftercare Programme Intervention is to build a long term holistic intervention which ensures that care leavers leaving Child care institutions have necessary support, resources, networks and mentoring needed to reach middle class outcomes and ensure they don't fall back into the cycle of poverty.

We believe stability across 4 broad areas together would provide the necessary foundations required for the care leavers to achieve and sustain middle class outcomes.

The 4 areas are as follows :

1. **Personal,**
2. **Financial,**
3. **Living conditions and**

4. Family

Critical Drivers

We recognise **the following as critical drivers** that act as a potential barrier for care leavers to achieve middle class outcomes, and our solutions are designed to tackle these as follows:

1. Emotional trauma drivers

Emotional health is one of the key drivers for personal stability. Personal stability acts as a foundation for financial stability. Together they play a key role in overall stability required for middle class outcomes. Majority of the care leavers coming from Child care institution environments have gone through emotional trauma. **Around one-third (34%)** of the respondents reported being physically abused during their life in Child care institution-care. **12% of the respondents** reported sexual abuse during their life in Child care institution-care. This is not accounting for their life before entering a Child care institution home adding to which we can expect these numbers to be higher.

The following are the key drivers for emotional trauma among aftercare care leavers

- Lack of early childhood care
- Emotional, physical or sexual abuse at some point of time in life
- Witness to domestic violence/abuse
- Lack of safe living conditions

The following effects of emotional trauma act as barriers toward achieving middle class outcomes:

- Low emotional resilience
- Low self-confidence
- Low self worth and esteem
- Inability to define, meaningfully breakdown and pursue goals
- Confused/unhealthy attachment
- Poor emotional awareness(self and others) and expression

2. Financial drivers

Majority of care leavers in child care institutions come from low to extremely low income backgrounds. Based on our research **less than 25%** of the adults receive any kind of aftercare support post exiting the Child care institution. **Less than 10%** of young adults received any support for finding Child care institutions, finding work or any other kind of support either from family, Child care institution trustees or NGOs. **60% of the adults** live in slums (registered and unregistered). All these are few examples out of many which pose a big barrier for care leavers to start their journey towards middle class outcomes and could lead to them falling back into the cycle of poverty.

The following are the key drivers for poor financial conditions among aftercare care leavers

- Poor financial conditions of family

- Parents/Guardians not invested in care leavers's future
- No inheritance

The following effects of financial instability act as barriers toward achieving middle class outcomes:

- Post Child care institution life, taking care of basic needs(food and shelter) becomes a significant challenge. It takes up a chunk of the income, causes stress and leads to poor quality of life
- Unable to pay for and gain certification and qualification required for a job readiness
- Dependent needs act as a barrier - Take up a significant portion of the earnings and drive poor life choices (short term impact choices)

3. Network drivers

Having a good network plays a key role for having personal stability. Everyone has ups and downs in life and having a network that helps not only in times of crisis but also helps you grow and develop. Having a network to fall back on also adds to some life confidence.

The following are the key drivers for poor networks among aftercare care leavers :

- Poor interpersonal and social interaction skills
- Social Stigma
- Poor social inclusion by the society

The following effects of poor networks act as barriers toward achieving middle class outcomes:

- Lack of safety net
- Poor/no access to opportunities to grow
- Draining networks

4. Skill, Qualification and Support driver

In our research we have found that **53% adults** who passed out of Child care institutions have not studied after Class 10. **83% adults** have not studied after Class 12 . **Only 14%** adults had secured a First Division either in Class 10, Class 12, Graduation or Post-graduation. **Only 30%** of the adults reported their schooling experience to be “easy” meaning were able to meaningfully cope with education. Around **56% adults** did not receive any kind of formal training in their life (to make them job-ready).

Skill, qualification and certifications plays a key role in making someone job ready. Without having good job prospects it is impossible to attain financial stability. Good financial stability is a key for stable living conditions and fostering a healthy family. In our research findings we found **61% of the earning adults** earn less than Rs.15,000 per month.**50% of the adults** are not able to manage their monthly expenses

The following are the key drivers for poor skills, qualifications and support among aftercare care leavers :

- Poor academic ability (Lack of adequate academic support through early childhood and traumatic and stressful childhood which shifts focus away from education.)
- Poor financial situations (cause they are unable to pay for acquiring qualifications and certifications)
- Lack of exposure - career awareness
- Lack of role models in their immediate surroundings

The following are the effects of poor skills, qualifications and support:

- Poor financial situations also drive them to make poor career choices early on in the career for generating urgent and quick income. These choices later limit their ability to earn higher wages.

5. Awareness, Basic Literacy and Knowledge drivers

Awareness and knowledge plays a key role in enabling freedom of choice and ensuring that care leavers are not getting exploited or are unfairly taken advantage of.

Here are some of the key drivers for the above mentioned driver :

- Low exposure
- Low access and awareness about rights and systemic accesses
- Lack of quality education and literacy at early age
- Limited access and awareness and access to government aid schemes

The following are the effects of Awareness, Basic Literacy and Knowledge

- No access to government schemes
- Exploitation at various fronts
- Negatively impacts personal voice
- Negatively impacts confidence

6. Legal Identity, Representation and Support drivers

Due to lack of proper legal identity, representation and social exclusion it becomes hard for the care leavers moving out of Child care institutions to have proper support from the system and community around them.

Some of the key drivers to this are also as follows :

- Social Stigma
- Poor social inclusion by the society
- Lack of basic legal identity documents - Lack of systemic support at the entry point and

during Child care institution life to help procure basic legal documents

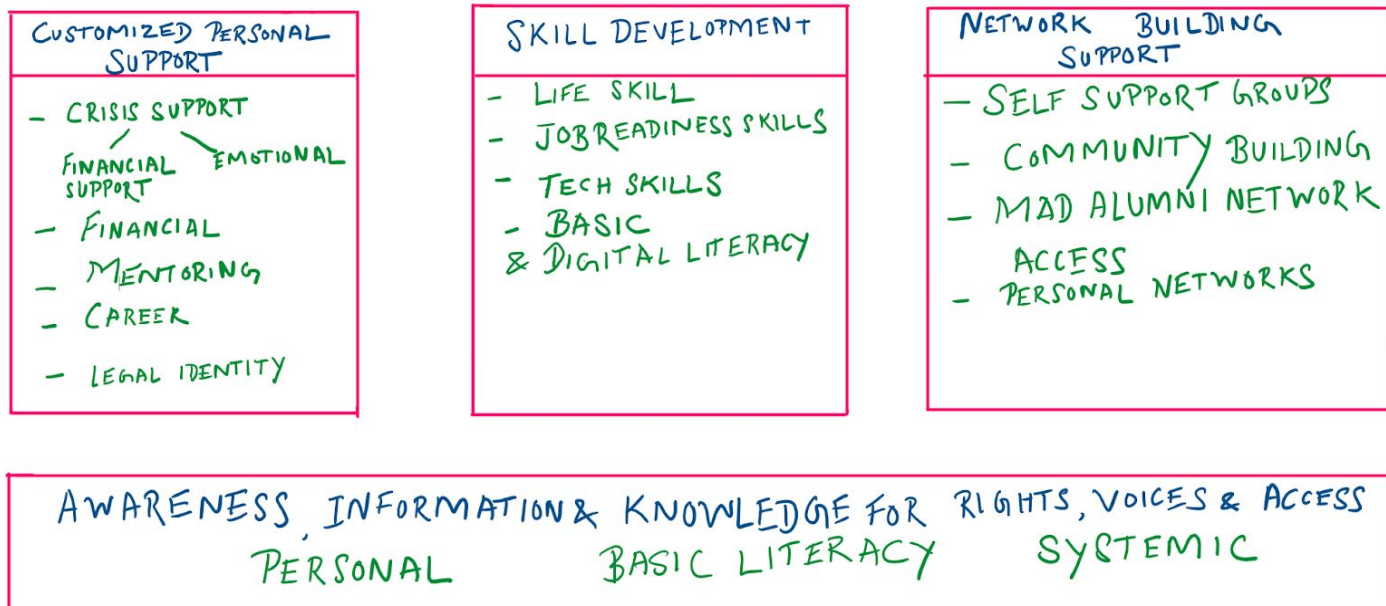
The following are the effects of Legal Identity, Representation and Support drivers

- No access to government schemes, and other institutions
- Financial exclusion
- Social exclusion

Programme Strategy

The Aftercare Programme has four broad strategies :

1. Providing customized personal support.
2. Providing and enabling skill development.
3. Provide network building support - By helping not just build and manage new networks but also creating platforms that provide access to networks.
4. Creating awareness and knowledge



Impact of Strategy on Outcomes

	Outcomes					
	Personal Stability					
Strategies	Self Confidence & Emotional Resilience	Emotional Health	Social Networks	Society and Community	Voice	Physical Health
Customized Personal Support						
Skill Development						
Network building Support						
Awareness, Information knowledge for rights, voices and access						

	Outcomes				
	Financial stability				
Strategies	Earnings Levels	Financial Inclusion	Saving	Debts	Assets
Customized Personal Support					
Skill Development					
Network building Support					
Awareness, Information knowledge for rights, voices and access					

	Outcomes				
	Living Conditions				
Strategies	Housing	Basic Infrastructure and Amenities	Access to Health Care	Legal identity	System access and Rights
Customized Personal Support					
Skill Development					
Network building Support					
Awareness, Information knowledge for rights, voices and access					

	Outcomes	
	Family stability	
Strategies	Quality of Support to Dependents	Family Relationships
Customized Personal Support		
Skill Development		
Network building Support		
Awareness, Information knowledge for rights, voices and access		

Theories of change

The Aftercare Programme is designed around **5 key theories of change**:

1. Care leavers will achieve and sustain middle class outcomes if they are supported and enabled to have stability on the following fronts - personal, financial, living conditions and family.
2. Providing customized personal support is important for care leavers to progress to middle class outcomes. Every care leaver will have differing life scenarios which when tackled by providing personalized support to help achieve equitable outcomes.
3. Skill development plays a key role in providing financial and personal stability.
4. Care leavers having diverse and active networks plays a key role in helping break the cycle of poverty and achieving middle class outcomes.
5. Awareness, knowledge and basic literacy will enable care leavers to have personal voice and enable freedom of choice and freedom from exploitation. At the same time it will give them access to the system which should help with financial and social inclusion which will play a key role in driving middle class outcomes for them.

Age Transitional Model for 18 to 28

Since MAD's programmes originated organically and were historically designed to work in parallel rather than holistically, a challenge we face is synchronicity and handoffs between the programmes, relevance at different age points, and also room to introduce new interventions.

We also have limited time available to work with children/care leavers, as they typically have a full day of school/college/job during the week, and like all children/care leavers must have adequate unstructured time for play and relaxation, and also to have time to rest and absorb learning. Since we are working with children/care leavers who are already under a significant degree of personal and emotional stress due to their circumstances, we have to be extra careful that we don't end up trying to overrun every bit of their free time with more development sessions.

As we increase the range of touchpoints we therefore need to think about how multiple interventions like life skills, knowledge, emotional health and subject learning can be delivered in a way that wraps together in the same session, rather than running separate parallel sessions for each.

We are therefore redesigning a better and more holistic empowerment solution for institutionalised children, that is age transitional, so that we can prioritise our interventions better depending on what they need at any given age, and can be better focused on each trajectory point in their developmental and outcome journey.

Overarching/ Base Principles of The Age Transitional Model for Aftercare

The model is built on the base principles which MAD follows as non-negotiables in all its interventions and these are

1. Individual care and attention for each care leavers
2. High achiever role models in form of volunteers who have good life experience and exposure
3. Safe space for the care leavers to learn and grow in a caring and encouraging environment
4. Personal network for the care leavers in the form of diverse volunteers, care leavers in their Self Support Groups and other care leavers in the programme
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Key Trajectory Points

Trajectory points represent key points or events that affect an individual's ability to continue to progress towards a healthy and stable middle class life outcome. For example; some schools only go up to the 8th standard, and some children naturally drop out at this point potentially due to access. Also around this age of about 14 some drop out potentially due to the need to start working, and in the case of girls it can be due to issues with inadequate sanitation. This isn't a widely common trajectory point, but for those who do drop off at this stage it means that they will not even have completed secondary education and their options for future progression are significantly damaged. We have to try and keep them in the education system, but in recognition of the fact that this is sometimes not possible, we should be aiming to ensure that by that age their literacy, numeracy, self-esteem, and basic life skills are at a level that means that they are not openly vulnerable to exploitation and can still continue to progress by their own accord, rather than being completely at a loss.

The next and first major trajectory point comes at the age of 16 when the child completes secondary school (10th standard). Whether they pass and the level at which they achieve any qualifications fundamentally determines their future options.

For children in Child care institutions, the next major trajectory point comes at 18, when they leave the Child care institution. The qualifications they have, and their ability to cope in the real world then determines whether or not they have options (further study, vocational or working apprenticeships) that

allow them to continue to progress along the journey to stability and middle class, or whether they fall away and stumble at hurdles and obstacles they cannot overcome.

Beyond this lies a looser trajectory point that is determined more by the transition to the responsibilities of adulthood, than even exit from university, or entry to work. From financial planning and management to maintaining jobs, managing social and personal relationships, family planning, and transitioning to stable independence, mid-20s are a challenging time, especially for individuals who have no personal or financial support systems and are facing the limitations of social stigmas. This is a time of vulnerability that can result in struggles with coming to terms with the past, unwise choices, financial crises, substance abuses, depressions, homelessness and higher mortality rates. Ensuring that they are equipped and supported to enter and navigate this phase is key to ensuring that they continue on the trajectory to a stable independent life outcome.

We have identified 2 key trajectory points from the age of 18-28.

1. At 21 - When care leavers start exiting university
2. At 26 - We care leavers are starting their early family life.

Age-Transition Model Stages for Aftercare

The model is built along 3 stages based on the age group of the beneficiaries.

Stage 1 (Aftercare Level 1)

The fourth stage for care leavers 18 years to 21 years support them in their career through university, vocational or job placements. Financial and logistical support is provided in terms of helping them to find a paying guest, rent for the pg etc. The care leavers are slowly prepared to phase out of the MAD support system and become self-reliant. A very important aspect of this is for the care leavers to have their own support system in emotional, financial and in relationships. Therefore, MAD facilitates the formulation of self-support groups among care leavers in the city who have been a part of the MAD interventions factoring various parameters so that they can support each other on a regular basis as well as in times of crisis. The hours of intervention with care leavers also gradually decreases as they become more stable as adults.

Stage 2 (Aftercare Level 2)

The next stage of MAD intervention is through ages of 21 to 25 where MAD provides a still active ongoing support for care leavers to continue to evolve and mature their self-support groups, connect with other groups to form a solid network foundation, and we provide mentoring support for relationships, finance, working etc.

Stage 3 (Aftercare Level 3)

The final stage of MAD intervention is through ages of 25 to 28 where MAD provides a more reduced, but still ongoing support for care leavers to continue their self-support groups and we provide mentoring support for relationship, finance, and family planning. We will encourage them to be buddies for other younger children in the care system, and to build support systems and networks at a local level for other children leaving the Child care institutions. This is also the age where care leavers attain financial and personal independence and begin to realise their potential of growing in their careers, relationships etc. Our role will be largely to provide mentorship and coaching for them providing support when they need it and during times of crisis, until they reach stable independence as adults.

Pre-18 (Aftercare Foundation Level)

There is another version of Aftercare which will be required for children who drop out of Child care institutions even before completing their 12th standard. This is still work under progress. For the year 2020-2021 our focus is going to be mainly to research and understand the current landscape of what happens to children who dropped out of the Child care institution at a younger age. Some of the complexities that include realities that children are 18 and below which implies they are still minors. We are exploring how interventions can be modified to build solutions based on this and a few other realities.