Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Try, Test and Learn Fund
– At-risk young people on income support

The Priority Investment Approach is a new way of looking at the welfare system. It uses data analysis to provide insights into how the system is working and uses those insights to find innovative ways of helping more Australians live independently of welfare.

What we know

At 30 June 2017 there were around 109,000 young people receiving Youth Allowance (other) or receiving Disability Support Pension with mental health as the primary condition. The latest Priority Investment Approach valuation shows that young people with these characteristics in 2016 have an average future lifetime cost of $306,000 per person.

The estimated total future lifetime cost for the group is $33.4 billion. On average, this group is expected to receive income support for some or all of 35 years over the rest of their lives. Eleven per cent are expected to receive income support for some or all of every year for the rest of their lives.

If nothing changes, 42 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 10 years, and 33 per cent will be receiving income support payments in 20 years.

At-risk young people

This priority group is defined as young people aged 16 to 21 receiving Youth Allowance (other) or Disability Support Pension (with a mental health condition).

The needs and barriers to employment for members of this group are highly varied and they may have a number of indicators of vulnerability.

These can include disengagement from education, experience of severe family breakdown, history of abuse, drug and alcohol misuse, family instability including living in out-of-home care and experiences with the juvenile justice system.

Young people in priority group

- 54 per cent are male
- 38 per cent live in inner or outer regional areas
- 16 per cent are Indigenous
- 7 per cent are on DSP with mental health issues

Try, Test and Learn Fund

The Try, Test and Learn Fund will seek new and innovative policy responses that support groups identified by Priority Investment Approach analysis as being at risk of long-term welfare dependency.