

Aftercare is a transitory care programme for young adults, who grew up in institutional care settings such as Child Care Institutions (CCI), Observation Homes or non-institutional care systems such as foster care homes or kinship care, and are required to leave them after attaining 18 years, if their permanent adoption by a family was not possible. The transition from supervised settings to independent living is challenging for young adults, who require adult support and mentoring to build resilience to deal with new situations and developmental changes.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 (amended in 2021) offers a continuum of care under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme and Mission Vatsalya through the Aftercare programme, ensuring that young adults can realise their potential, becoming independent, responsible adults.

Aftercare is provided from 18 years onwards for a maximum of three years, extendable till 23 years (in exceptional cases), or until the young person is mainstreamed into society, whichever is earlier. Don Bosco institutions have traditionally offered children this support into their adulthood—George and Sonia being examples of this care.

A CONTINUUM OF CARE

George, at 21 years, boarded his first flight in April 2026; on his way to study Nursing at IBAF Pflege-Schulungszentrum in Germany, after winning a well-deserved scholarship. His life has been tough. George came into the care of Don Bosco Sneha Bhavan, Kochi, Kerala (BREADS' partner), during his 10th Grade. He had been living in another institution, as his father, a hardworking autorickshaw (tuktuk) driver, could not afford his education.

George's mother had already passed away.

Just as George was finding his footing in the 11th grade, tragedy struck when his father fell gravely ill with severe heart problems. With no one else to turn to, George stepped up as his father's sole caregiver in hospital. Despite their desperate hopes of recovery, his father passed away, leaving George to navigate the world without his parents.



A NEW DAWN

Yet, from this heartbreaking loss emerged extraordinary resilience. Despite missing half a year of classes during his father's hospitalisation, George poured his energy into his studies, successfully passing his exams against all odds. While formulating his Individual Care Plan, George set his sights on an ambitious dream: pursuing a career in healthcare in Germany. Supported every step of the way by the Don Bosco Sneha Bhavan family, George tackled this goal with unwavering diligence, eventually conquering the rigorous B2 level of German language proficiency. As George flies to Germany, his dream also takes off, reminding us that with relentless determination and a supportive community, the darkest nights will herald a brilliant dawn.



TRAUMA TO TRIUMPH

Sonia (name changed) at 13 years, came to Don Bosco Welfare Centre Society, Palluruthy, Kerala (BREADS' partner), after a family crisis left her emotionally shattered and socially withdrawn. Fear and uncertainty defined her early days, and she struggled to trust or hope. At Valsalya Bhavan (a Shelter home for girls), she found compassionate care, counselling, and a structured environment that gradually restored her sense of stability and dignity. Sonia discovered a powerful anchor in education, which she used to rebuild her life.

Sonia scored 89% in Class 10 and pursued General Nursing and Midwifery, completing it with a First Class. Despite financial challenges, she balanced part-time work with her studies and went on to complete her Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing, securing the 9th rank in the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, Bangalore, Karnataka, a remarkable academic achievement.

AFTERCARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVES :

- Keeping in mind their best interests.
- Considering factors such as individuality, circumstances, background, gender, age, disabilities, academic abilities, educational and vocational skills, talents, mental and other physical health conditions.
- Initiating **Individual Care Plans** as early as possible during the child's stay in the CCI or in alternative forms of care.
- Facilitating the child's participation in the preparation of their Individual Care Plan.
- Upholding their dignity and worth, ensuring rights-based and non-discriminatory practices.
- Ensuring a safe and nurturing, youth friendly environment, with periodical mentoring and counselling to promote independence.
- Ensuring high standards of care through adequate resources and capacity building for the personnel working with them.

Today, at 26 years, Sonia has realised her dream. She is working as a staff nurse at Al Mouwasat Hospital in Saudi Arabia, living a life of dignity and independence. Her journey from trauma to triumph is a testament to her own determination and hard work, as well as the care, opportunity, and education that she could access through Valsalya Bhavan.



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