

Post Care Education Financial Support for Carers Policy

This policy provides financial assistance to carers who continue to support a young person in their home after 18 years of age while they complete their Year 12 studies.



Document approval

The *Post Care Education Financial Support for Carers Policy* has been endorsed and approved by:

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1 Purpose of policy

1.1 Purpose

This policy provides financial assistance to carers who allow a young person to remain in their home after 18 years of age and continue to support them while they complete Year 12 or an equivalent qualification.

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) encourages Year 12 completion by young people in out-of-home care (OOHC) to help ensure that care leavers access the recognised income and employment benefits of Year 12 completion¹.

1.2 Target group

Young people who have exited statutory or supported OOHC due to age, but continue to reside with either their authorised DCJ carer (including relative/kinship) or funded service provider (FSP) carer while completing Year 12 or equivalent studies on a full-time basis.

1.3 Background and policy links

This policy contributes to the NSW Government's 2021 goal to better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage.

In addition, DCJ has a number of objectives to support improved client outcomes aligned to the DCJ Strategic Policy. The two key objectives supported by this policy are:

1. Improve long term outcomes
2. Improve client experience

The following documents are related to this policy:

- [Guidelines for the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care](#)
- [Post Care Education Financial Support – Procedure for placements managed by Funded Service Providers](#)
- [Teenage Education Payment Guidelines](#)

¹ See for example Ryan C. 2011, *Year 12 completion and youth transitions*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) Research Report 56, National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), SA.

2 Definitions

The table below lists terms, keywords and/or abbreviations as used throughout this document.

Term	Definition
Care leaver	Young person 18-24 years (inclusive) who was previously in NSW statutory or supported OOHC and exited care due to age (OOHC orders generally end at 18 years of age).
Carer	Person providing a home to those care leavers in respect of whom the financial support is being provided. While these people are no longer 'authorised carers' of those care leavers, the term 'carer' is used in this policy for ease of reference.
Course completion	A course of study is considered complete two weeks after classes and assessments have finished and the young person is no longer required to study or complete work. Graduation is not be used as the 'course completion' date.
DCJ (formerly FACS)	NSW Department of Communities and Justice (formerly Family and Community Services).
Funded Service Provider (FSP)	An accredited and DCJ funded agency or organisation which provides OOHC services.
Full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary school where course completion is the young person's primary occupation • TAFE course provided the course is at least 15 hours per week including work placement • Any other course equivalent to Year 12 provided that the course is not specifically described as a part-time course.
Out-of-home care (OOHC)	Statutory or supported OOHC as defined in sections 135A and 135B of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998</i> .
Year 12 or equivalent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher School Certificate (HSC) • HSC via school-based apprenticeship or traineeship • HSC via Vocational Education and Training (VET) Board Endorsed² courses • TAFE NSW Certificate IV in Tertiary Preparation • International Baccalaureate, diploma level.

² Courses that are endorsed by the Board of Studies NSW to contribute to the HSC.

3 Scope and application

This policy is to be followed by DCJ and FSP staff with case management and case work responsibility for OOHC, leaving care, and after care.

This policy applies to:

- young people (aged 18 to 24) who were in statutory or supported OOHC with an authorised carer receiving a care allowance immediately prior to the young person reaching 18 years of age

where the young person:

- exits care due to age (OOHC ends at 18 years), and
- continues to live with the carer while completing Year 12 or equivalent studies full-time (part-time in certain circumstances), and
- is achieving the minimum standards in their studies which suggests they are likely to achieve successful completion.

The policy does not apply if:

- the young person is subject to guardianship or adoption orders, or
- the placement ended for reasons other than that the young person attained the age of 18 years.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Guidelines for the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care*.

DCJ staff should read this policy in conjunction with *Financial support for children and young people in OOHC placements managed by Communities and Justice*.

4 Legislation

The financial support outlined in this policy is provided in accordance with section 161(3) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* (the Act).

Section 161(3) of the Act authorises continued financial assistance to people who continue to provide a home to a young person between the age of 18 and 24 years (inclusive) who is residing with them for the purpose of securing full-time education or training, and where financial assistance was being provided under section 161 immediately prior to that young person reaching 18 years. This section applies to statutory and supported OOHC.

5 Policy statement

Many young people turn 18 while completing Year 12. This is more likely for those in OOHC as the circumstances in which they entered care and disruptions to their education may result in them finishing school at an older age than their peers.

Young people due to transition to independence from OOHC at the same time that they finish school are at risk of not attaining their HSC if they need to establish independent accommodation and find work to pay rent.

To address this risk, financial support is available to carers who extend a foster/kinship care arrangement for a young person studying Year 12 or equivalent on a full-time basis.

Financial support for part-time study may be approved where a young person has parental responsibilities or health issues that prevent them from undertaking full-time studies.

6 Financial support

Financial support is provided via the Post Care Education Financial Support (PCEFS) allowance. This fortnightly allowance matches the DCJ carer allowance for 16 to 17 year olds and is paid at one of three rates determined by the young person's level of support needs.

The allowance is paid to DCJ managed carers by DCJ and to FSP managed carers via their FSP. See *Post Care Education Financial Support – Procedure for placements managed by Funded Service Providers* for the procedure by which FSPs advise carer eligibility and request PCEFS payment from DCJ.

PCEFS is available until the young person:

- completes the course of study, or
- ceases to study full-time, or
- leaves the carer's home, or
- attains 25 years, whichever is sooner.

PCEFS must be part of an approved leaving care plan for young people leaving statutory care or an approved case plan for young people in supported care arrangements.

If a young person leaves the carer's home having reached 18 years of age, but returns to reside with them within twelve months, PCEFS may be provided from that date onward if the criteria are met.

If the young person no longer lives with the carer they may be eligible for the Aftercare allowance (see *Guidelines on the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care*). This is a time-limited fortnightly allowance to help secure stable, affordable accommodation while undertaking full-time studies and seeking a long-term housing solution. Additional eligibility criteria apply.

Note that PCEFS (paid to the carer) and the Aftercare allowance (paid to the young person) are mutually exclusive. Only one of these allowances to support accommodation while studying may be accessed at a time.

Receipt of PCEFS does not affect eligibility for continuation of the Teenage Education Payment which is assessed separately in accordance with the *Teenage Education Payment Guidelines*.

7 Roles and responsibilities

Staff with case management responsibility for OOHC and the transition to independence are to ensure that this policy and its associated procedures are implemented. This should be embedded in leaving care planning and support, which starts when a child is 15 years old.

8 Monitoring and review

The DCJ Child and Family Directorate will monitor, review and update this policy as required.

9 Support and advice

For support and advice related to this policy contact the Design and Stewardship branch of the DCJ Child and Family Directorate at:
Permanency.Support@facs.nsw.gov.au