**Carer Supports Letter Template- PSP Providers**

**\*Refer to Instruction Guidelines to fill in the template letter\***

<Carer full name>

<Carer postal address or email>

Ref: <reference number>

<Today’s date>

Dear <carer first name>

**Your Carer Supports Letter**

Thank you for being a carer. We appreciate all that you do and acknowledge, respect and value the enormous difference you make to the lives of the children and young people in your care.

As part of the NSW Government’s out-of-home care (OOHC) reforms, the Minister for Families and Communities is ensuring that you receive an annual letter about the payments and supports available to you, and to provide greater visibility and accountability of the government-funded OOHC program.

The information in this letter reflects your current circumstances and may vary if there are changes to your caring needs or the circumstances of those in your care.

To ensure you remain informed of your supports, an updated letter will be sent to you each year as part of <child or young person’s> annual case plan review.

**Carer payments**

**Care Allowance -** All authorised foster, relative and kinship carers receive a fortnightly allowance to cover the typical costs of children in their care.

At a minimum, all carers must receive at least the standard care rate of the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), which is published online each year.

The Care Allowance is not considered assessable income for tax purposes and is not means-tested.

The Care Allowance increases each financial year due to indexation, which reflects changes in the cost of living, and is backdated where relevant.

**Care Allowance inclusions**

The Care Allowance is paid out of each child’s funding package and covers typical costs for household expenses and child-related expenses including:

* food
* shelter
* utilities
* clothing and footwear
* household provisions
* daily travel
* recreation and holidays
* gifts
* haircuts
* pocket money and hobbies
* general education costs
* music lessons
* sporting activities
* school excursions and camps
* general hygiene needs/personal care
* dental and medical
* pharmaceutical costs
* suitable car restraints

Carers manage their Care Allowance budget and can speak with their caseworker about reasonable costs that are considered above and beyond this list.

The NSW Government also provides other allowances for carers to continue supporting post-18-year-olds who remain living with them after leaving care. These payments are subject to eligibility and can be discussed with your caseworker at the time.

**Permanency Support Program packages**

Non-government agencies are funded by the Department to deliver OOHC services.

The Permanency Support Program (PSP) is a ‘packaged’ service model consisting of different funding packages that are tailored to meet a child’s individual needs and circumstances. Most children receive:

* **a case plan goal package** for their permanency goal
* **a baseline package** for the type of care (e.g. Foster Care)
* **a child needs package** which varies from low to high needs depending on the child’s assessed needs.

Those with complex and specific needs may be allocated a **specialist package** to cover additional costs.

**PSP package inclusions**

PSP packages fund agencies to provide support and arrange services for children to achieve their goals.

The funding is intended to cover agency costs relating to everyday casework and case management (e.g. case planning, family time (contact), Life story work, Health and Education plans etc.), business administration and overheads, property, recruitment, and assessment and training for existing and prospective carers.

The packages also cover costs directly relating to carers and children, such as:

* care allowances
* planned absences and respite
* clinical services (such as counselling, psychology, behaviour therapy, psychiatric care)
* copies of birth certificates
* educational and special education supports
* general allied health provision
* cultural supports
* mentoring
* interpreter or language services as needed

A detailed list of packages under the PSP and a breakdown of expenses covered by each package is available on the [Q&A Carer supports and PSP funding factsheet](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/q-a-carer-supports-and-psp-funding.pdf) on dcj.nsw.gov.au.

**OOHC payments you currently receive**

The total amount below reflects the OOHC payments you directly receive. It does not include any payments outside of OOHC from the Commonwealth Government (e.g. provided by Services Australia).

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Child or young person** | **Payment** | **Rate at <date>** |
| <Child or young person’s name> | Care Allowance | <fortnightly rate> |
| <Child or young person’s name> | <other payment>  | <rate> |
| **Total amount you currently receive each fortnight** | **<total amount>** |

**PSP packages for children and young people in your care**

The total amount below reflects how much the government funds your case managing agency for a child in your care. The agency is required to provide support and arrange services using the funding available.

It does not reflect how much funding is available for an agency to pass on to carers.

|  |
| --- |
| **PSP packages for <child or young person’s name>** |
| **PSP Package** | **Type** | **Annual rate at <date>** |
| Case Plan Goal | <package type> | <annual rate> |
| Baseline | <package type> | <annual rate> |
| Child Needs | <package type> | <annual rate> |
| Other Specialist | <package type> | <annual rate> |
| Other Specialist | <package type> | <one-off> |
| **Total annual funding amount for <child or young person’s name>**  | **<total annual amount>** |

**Other government supports**

In addition to the PSP, there are a range of other government supports available to carers of children and young people in OOHC.

A detailed list of payments and supports available from the NSW Government and Commonwealth Government is on the [OOHC Carer supports and resources](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/carers/oohc-carer-supports-and-resources.html) page on dcj.nsw.gov.au.

For example:

**Education**

* [Teenage Education Payment (TEP)](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/oohc-education-pathway/teenage-education-payment.html)

Financial support (means-tested) for carers and guardians of young people aged 16-18 years in OOHC to remain engaged in school or other education and training.

* [Post Care Education Financial Support (PCEFS)](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/oohc-education-pathway/post-care-education-financial-support.html)

Financial Support (non-means tested) for carers to maintain the current living and support arrangements for young people aged 18 to 24 to complete their NSW Higher School Certificate.

* [OOHC Education Pathway](https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/service-providers/oohc-and-permanency-support-services/oohc-education-pathway.html)

Personalised learning and support planning for students attending NSW Government, Catholic and Independent schools who are in OOHC.

**Health**

* [OOHC Health Pathway program](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/programs/Pages/out-of-home-care.aspx)

Provides a primary health assessment and a Health Management Plan for all children and young people in OOHC.

* [Foster Child Health Care Card](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/foster-child-health-care-card)

Support for carers (non-means tested) to cheaper medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for children in their care. The card is issued to an individual foster child and is non-transferrable.

* [Child Dental Benefits Schedule (CDBS)](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-dental-benefits-schedule)

Covers part or the full cost of some basic dental services for eligible children.

**Other means-tested government payments**

* [Family Tax Benefit](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/family-tax-benefit)

Helps with the cost of raising children (means-tested).

* [Child Care Subsidy](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/child-care-subsidy) and [Additional Child Care Subsidy](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/additional-child-care-subsidy)

Assistance to help with the cost of approved or registered child-care (means-tested) and an additional subsidy that covers the full cost of approved childcare for up to 100 hours per child per week.

**Advocacy**

* [My Forever Family](https://www.myforeverfamily.org.au/)My Forever Family provides specialised carer support, training and advocacy for all foster, relative and kinship carers in NSW. Visit www.myforeverfamily.org.au or call 1300 782 975.
* [AbSec](http://www.absec.org.au/help-for-carers)AbSec provides culturally appropriate carer support, training and advocacy for Aboriginal foster and kinship carers in NSW. Visit www.absec.org.au/help-for-carers or call 1800 888 698.
* [CREATE Foundation](https://create.org.au/)CREATE Foundation provides support, advocacy and representation for children and young people in OOHC. Visit www.create.org.au or call 1800 655 105.

**Concerns and complaints**

In the first instance, please raise any concerns or issues with your caseworker who can work with you to resolve the matter. Contact details are below.

If you feel your concerns have not been adequately addressed, you can make a complaint directly to us via <insert agency complaint mechanism>.

You can also submit a complaint to DCJ or the independent NSW Ombudsman.

The nsw.gov.au website provides a [Carer complaints support guide](https://www.nsw.gov.au/community-services/foster-relative-and-kinship-care/caring-for-kids-guide/carers-complaints-support-guide) to help carers work with their caseworker to resolve issues as they arise.

To make a complaint to DCJ, call the Complaints Line 1800 000 164 (9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday) or email complaints@dcj.nsw.gov.au.

Complaints about an OOHC agency or DCJ can also be made to the NSW Ombudsman via [ombo.nsw.gov.au/complaints](https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/complaints) or 1800 451 524.

**Contact details**

Thank you again for the positive difference you are making to the lives of the children in your care.

If you would like to discuss any of the information in this letter, please contact <enter caseworker details>.

Sincerely,

<enter signature>