

# Leaving care and aftercare resources pack

To be used in conjunction with the  
Leaving care and aftercare mandate

**Out-of-Home Care Programs, Child and Family  
Strategy, Policy and Commissioning**

October 2024



# Three key stages to leaving care

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Leaving statutory care to transition to adulthood is a journey young people in out-of-home care need to take with the guidance and support of their carers, caseworkers, community and support system.

Caseworkers play a key role in navigating this journey and supporting young people to build the skills and access the resources needed to navigate adult life.

This journey has three key stages:

1. Leaving care planning – plans and supports put in place before a young person turns 18.
2. Aftercare planning – plans activated when the young person turns 18.
3. Aftercare support – support and after care plan reviews for young people after they turn 18

This resource pack explores the process, actions and supports caseworkers can use to guide young people on this journey. It should be used in conjunction with the Leaving and after care mandate (DCJ only), [Guidelines for assistance after leaving OOHC](#) and [After Care Allowance Guidelines](#).

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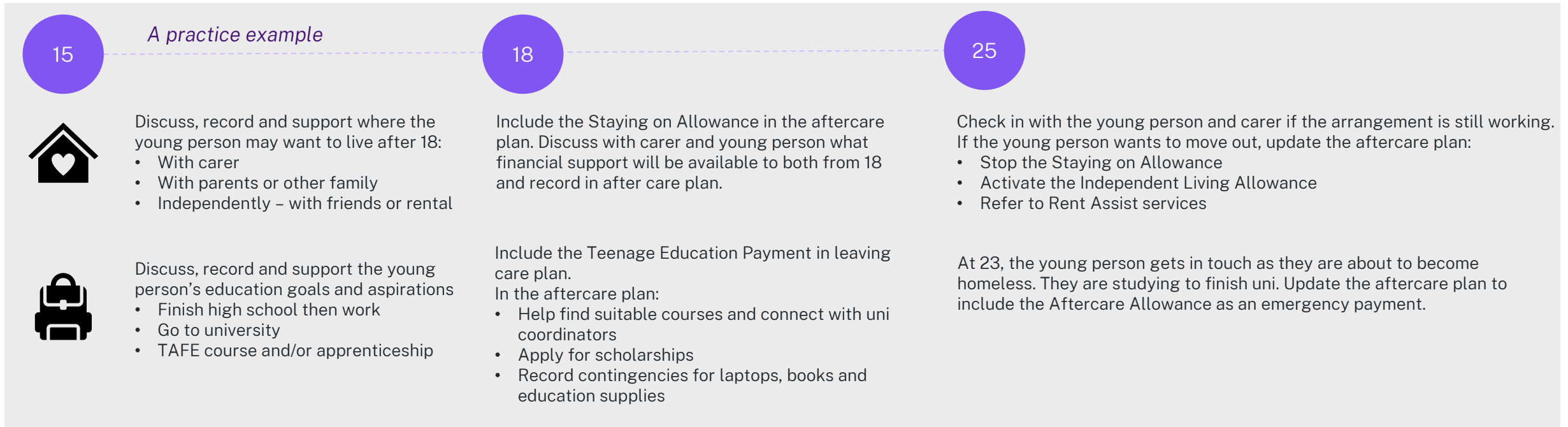
# Differences between leaving care and aftercare planning

## Leaving care plan

Assistance between the ages 15 and 17 to prepare young people to leave statutory care at 18.

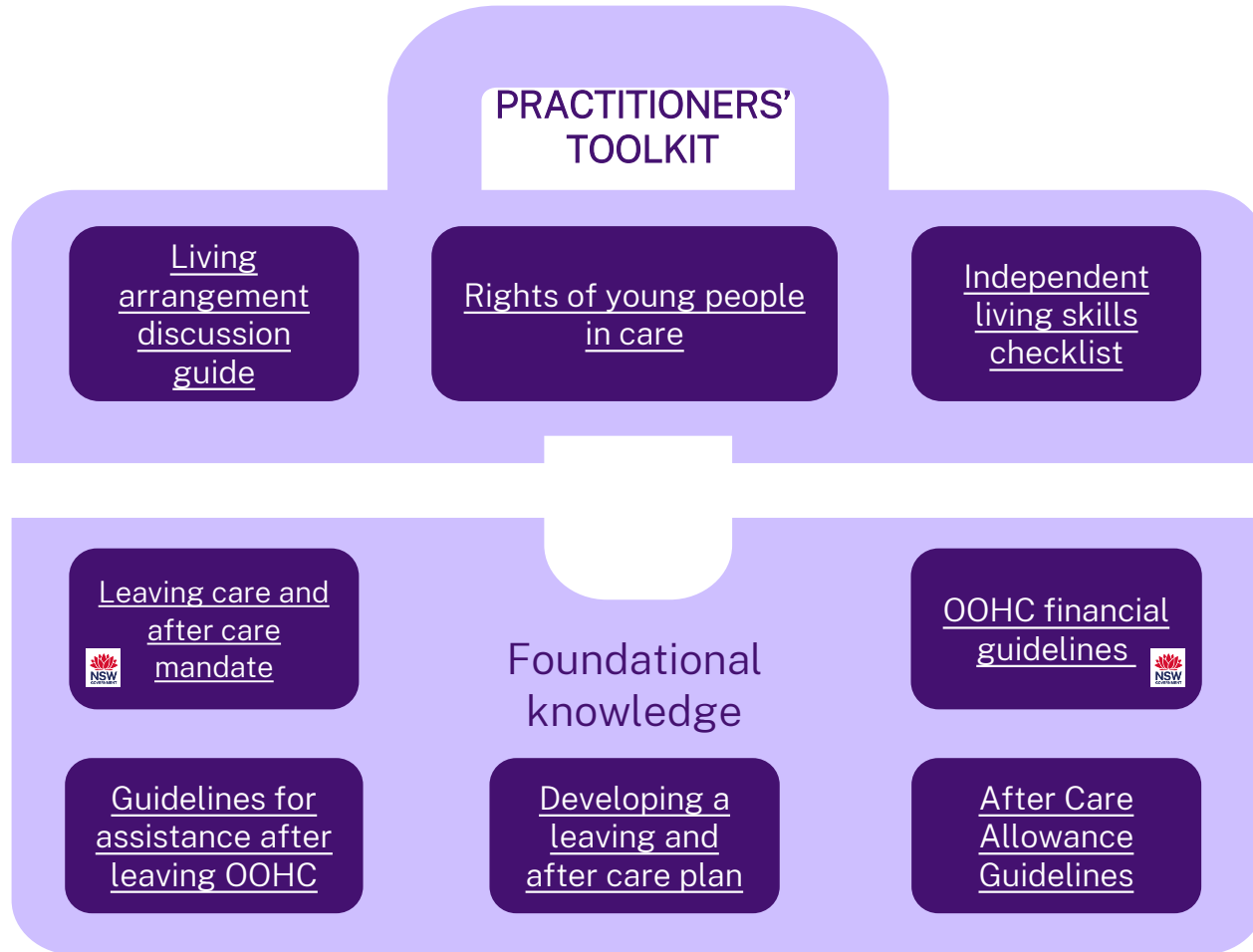
## Aftercare plan

Assistance between the ages of 18 up to 25 to support young people after they leave statutory care at 18.



- Care leavers have a right to a leaving care (15 to 17 years of age) or aftercare (18 to 24 years of age) case plan.
- Aftercare case planning and support is available to statutory care leavers through their DCJ or NGO caseworker.

# What you need to know about leaving care and aftercare planning



Leaving and aftercare planning can change the life trajectory of young people in out-of-home care.

As practitioners, equip yourself with the knowledge and tools to best advocate for young people's rights and entitlements.

Each tool in the practitioner's toolkit gives clear instructions on developing a leaving care plan and aftercare plan, including planned financials and other essentials.

# Planning process

## 6 steps to meaningful leaving care planning

### 1. AWARENESS

Explain the importance of this life stage to the young person. Let them know you are there to support them to play an active role in determining their future.

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Start planning for leaving care once a young person has turned 15. Make it an ongoing process, not a one-off discussion. Meet the young person where they're at, without judgement. Guide young people to think about their future by pursuing their interests.

Prioritise the young person's views and make space to listen. Call them ahead of all meetings to remind them what you'll discuss and encourage them to come with ideas. Establish goals and measure progress. Actively seek positive role models and networks with and for the young person. Celebrate their achievements.

15-18

### 2. ENGAGEMENT

Who else should be involved in this discussion? Engage the carer, family members and the other significant people in the young person's life.

### 3. KNOWLEDGE & EMPOWERMENT

Build the young person's knowledge of their rights, responsibilities and entitlements.

15-18

Encourage the young person to read about transitioning to adult life. *Your next step* or *Leading the way* are great resources but can be overwhelming. Consider dividing them by topic and having separate conversations on each topic. Support the young person in reflecting on, and creating goals around relationships, studies and employment.

### 4. ADVOCACY

Start with the need, then set the goals. Financial support does not replace good leaving care planning. Young people are entitled to know their rights and advocate for their entitlements. Be their supporter and build a trusting relationship.

15+

Empower the young person to have their voice heard. Include their needs in their leaving care plan. Focus on helping them reach their potential as they transition to adulthood.

### 5. A CLEAR PLAN FORWARD

Ensure the young person's aftercare plan and planned financials are submitted for approval at least **3 months** before the young person turns 18.

17-18

Review the case plan with the young person, update the goal to 'aftercare' and submit it for approval. Schedule reminders for contingency payments. Actively engage their network of trusted people. The young person should have a clear plan for housing, education or employment at minimum.

Keep in touch. Check in regularly, particularly before they turn 21. It can be a text, a call or an email. Expect new issues to arise and aftercare plans to change. Act early, get aftercare support or contingency payments amended as needed. Consider referral to a specialist aftercare service for young people with more complex needs.

18-25

### 6. CHECK-IN AND REVIEW

Our duty of care for statutory care leavers continues until they turn 25. Regular check-ins can prevent issues from escalating and lets young people know they are not alone.

What are the young person's needs?

Who has participated?  
Who needs to participate?

What do I need to do to help meet those needs?

# Key elements of leaving care and aftercare plans

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**Start leaving care planning for young people with a Case Plan Goal of Long-Term Care. Consider including:**

Discuss their hopes and expectations for the future, explain the journey you are starting together. Discuss the [Charter of Rights](#).

Explore their interests, strengths, skills and needs – use the [Independent Living Skills Checklist](#) and plan how to develop them.

Continue to grow the young person's support network. Identify "significant others" and get them involved. Harness Family Finding.

Submit referral for a Victim's of Crime legal audit (via the CFDU) to DCJ Legal.

Are there any health and wellbeing issues to be aware of? Start the transition process to adult NDIS if needed.

Discuss contraception, sexual health and family planning.

Share links to [Your next step](#) and [Leading the way](#) with the young person and the carer. These can spark good discussion.

**PSP providers can activate specialist funding packages for leaving care.**

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Assist the young person to set up ID, a bank account, Tax File Number and Medicare.

Review and update the [Independent Living Skills Checklist](#). Discuss how skills will be developed or addressed with the young person, carer, and significant others.

Seek options for lessons and support the young person to obtain a driver's licence.

Arrange Certificate of Aboriginality (keep with the birth certificate).  
Complete a full Genogram.

Consider a network meeting or Family Group Conferencing to establish safe connections to last beyond their time in care.

Discuss supports needed to complete high school and intentions for further education e.g. tutoring and/or scholarship applications.

Explore employment or training opportunities such as apprenticeship schemes.

Assist applications for NDIS, SIL or SDA if needed (collect required documents).

Arrange Youth Allowance and help with financial literacy and [budgeting skills](#).

Organise permanent residency or citizenship if needed (check status at age 17).

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Review and update the [Independent Living Skills Checklist](#).

Assist the young person to enrol to vote, get their proof of age card and passport.

Submit the aftercare financial plan a **minimum of 3 months before 18**. Allow longer for complex cases. Include allowances and contingencies.

Apply for financial support where required (TILA). Prepare for receiving Victims of Crime recognition if relevant.

Support school attendance and completion. Arrange tutoring/homework clubs/HSC boot camps if needed.

**NDIS:** Arrange functional assessment for supported accommodation if needed and manage transition to adult NDIS before 18.

Apply for a Guardian and/or Financial Manager where needed.

Apply for WWCC if remaining in a home with other children in care.

Ensure they have somewhere safe and suitable to live. Help with applications.

Complete Leaving Care Overview and Letter to be signed by Minister **4 weeks before 18**.

18-24

Meet the young person before their birthday, Give them a birthday card and a copy of their plan.

Remind them where they can go if they need help, including the Care Leavers Line.

Connect those with more complex needs with specialist aftercare providers.

Make referral to young adult services e.g. family planning, mental health.

Activate support network and support them with a plan to remain connected.

Help access funding from Centrelink and assist with home establishment.

Review allowances annually until 21. Communicate changes in advance.

Reassure the young person they can access support until 25 should they need it.

Provide information about how they can access their files about their time in care.

Click on the links below for more information

Culture and connection

Health and wellbeing

Education

Training and employment

Living skills

Legal matters

Housing

Financial assistance

# Critical domains on the path to independence

Your work with young people will impact the rest of their life. Grow their confidence and independence across these critical domains:

## Financial independence

- Budgeting and saving
- Afterpay, credit cards and loans
- Scams
- Taxation
- Financial entitlements
- Managing large sums of money

## Life goals

- Self-efficacy
- A positive self-image
- Short-term planning: school subjects, etc.
- Long-term planning including career planning

## Legal rights and responsibilities

- Proof of identity (100 points)
- Enrolling to vote
- Rights and where to get advice
- Avoiding and paying fines and WDO

## Culture and belonging

- Understanding and dealing with trauma, grief, loss, dislocation and isolation
- Meaningful connection with family, community, and culture

## Life skills

- Communication and social skills
- Personal care and hygiene
- Nutrition, cooking, shopping, cleaning
- Public transport
- Driving licence

## Employment

- Resume and cover letter
- Job seeking skills
- Apprenticeships and traineeships
- Career advice

## Housing

- Staying with carer
- Options for independent living
- Finding housing
- Rental rights and obligations
- Rent and bond assistance

## Education

- Education planning meetings
- Tutoring and learning support
- Tools, resources
- Financial support: TEP or PCEFS
- Study options: TAFE, uni, scholarships

## Health and wellbeing

- Connecting with a GP
- Medication and self-care
- Sexual health, safety and consent
- Making decisions about alcohol and other drug use

## Connections

- Family contact
- Interests and hobbies
- Group activities and social events
- Healthy and safe relationships

# Programs and supports: Living skills

Useful information, guidance and support services for all stages of a young person's life in NSW can be found on the [NSW government website](#).

Some quick links:

- [Exam stress](#)
- [Work hours and conditions](#)
- [Your legal rights](#)

The [DCJ website](#) also has useful information about building independent living skills.

Some quick links:

- [Independent Living Skills checklist](#)
- [Healthy eating](#)
- [Money and budgeting skills](#)
- [Using public transport](#)
- [Grocery shopping](#)
- [General housekeeping and cleaning skills](#)
- [Basic home maintenance](#)
- [Basic vehicle maintenance](#)
- [Personal hygiene](#)
- [Interpersonal skills](#)
- [Time management skills](#)
- [Coping with loneliness](#)



## TRANSPORT

- [Free Safer Drivers Course](#)
- [Driver Licensing Access Program \(DLAP\)](#)
- [Concession Opal Card](#)



## FINANCIAL LITERACY

- [Budgeting and managing money](#)
- [Managing large sums of money](#)
- [Help paying debt](#)
- [Help paying fines](#)
- [Local support services for anything: Ask Izzy](#)



## OTHER RESOURCES

- [Your next step](#): an information booklet for young people leaving care that helps prepare for independent living.
- [Go Your Own Way](#): an information kit for young people beginning to plan their transition to adulthood.
- [School Leavers Information Kit](#): helps school leavers understand their education, training and employment options.
- [Your Career Quiz](#): a quiz to learn about study, training, or job options specific to individual needs and goals.
- [My Future](#): A website with resources that explore career pathways.
- [Careers guidance](#): free phone service to help match and find the right skills and training. [Make an appointment here](#).



# Programs and supports: Culture and connection

## Social

- Connection to sports groups or clubs
- Connection with other young people leaving OOHC to share experiences (Create Foundation)

## Disability

- Supported decision making
- Decision-making and capacity – short course
- NDIS and leaving care planning

## Religion

- Connection to local religious groups (church, mosque, etc.)

## Gender and sexuality

- LGBTQIA+ services and community organisations (Gender Centre)

## Culture

- Cultural planning
- Family Finding and accessing care records
- Life story work
- Connection to kin and community (useful links include ABSEC and the Community Migrant Resource Centre)



# Programs and supports: Housing

## SPECIFIC SUPPORT FOR CARE LEAVERS

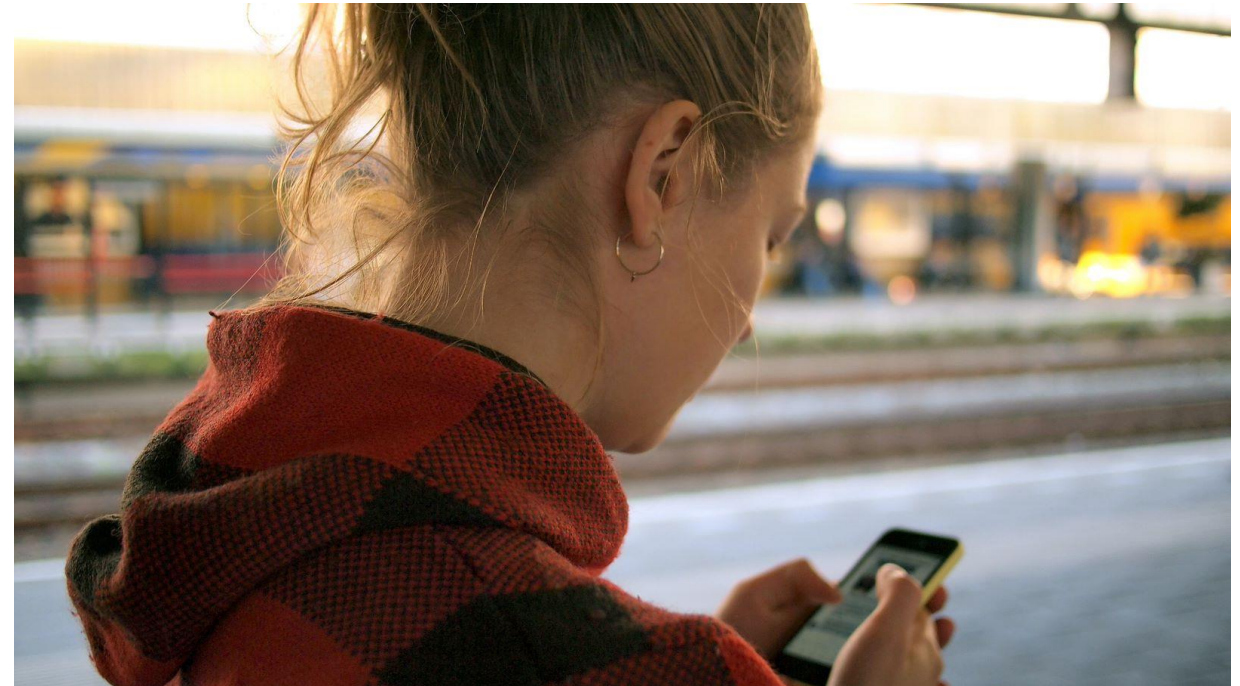
- Youth Initiative (YI): personal advice, mentoring, transitional support and short-term accommodation
- Foyer Central: cheap accommodation for up to 2 years for young people leaving care who are studying, in training or employment and at risk of homelessness.
- Supported Independent Living (SIL) and Therapeutic Supported Independent Living (TSIL): accommodation and support programs for young people in the Permanency Support Program (PSP) that are over 16 years of age.

## HOMELESSNESS SUPPORT

- My Foundations Youth Housing: affordable housing for young people
- Stepping Stone House: accommodation and personal development to help homeless and at-risk youth
- Homeless Youth Assistance Program (HYAP): support for young people who are connected to a Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS) in the Hunter and New England Area Health Districts

## RENTAL SUPPORT

- Rent Assistance
- Rentstart Bond Loan
- Bond Extra
- Rent Choice Youth



# Programs and supports: Education and training

- **Western Sydney University Out-of-Home-Care Pathways Scholarship**: for young people with a care experience wanting to enrol in a degree or diploma.
- **Charles Sturt University Stronger Communities Scholarship**: for young people with a care experience wanting to enrol in a degree regionally or online.
- **University Admissions Centre (UAC)**: a website to learn about different courses, the **Educational Access Scheme** and the **Equity Scholarships available**.
- **Fee-free TAFE courses**: tuition-free training places for people wanting to train, retrain or upskill.
- **Apprenticeships and traineeships**: free opportunities through TAFE NSW.
- **Smart & Skilled Fee-Free Scholarship**: covers the fees for qualifications in job-ready skills.
- **Youth Development Scholarships**: Financial help towards school expenses.
- **Austudy**: for over 25s.
- **ABSTUDY**: payments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- **Youth allowance**: for students and apprentices under 24 or job seekers under 21.
- **Teenage Education Payment**: for carers and guardians of 16-18 year olds to help them stay engaged in education or training.
- **Post Care Education Financial Support Allowance**: non-means tested payment aimed at helping young people aged 18-25 complete their NSW HSC.



# Programs and supports: Training and employment

## Planning a career

- [School subjects you like and jobs they can lead to](#)
- [How to make a resume \(with examples\)](#)
- [Interview skills](#)
- [Vocational Education and Training \(VET\)](#)

## Getting a job or apprenticeship

- [Services Australia for job seekers](#)
- [Job Jumpstart](#): a government-run source of resources and activities to help job seekers work out what jobs might suit them
- [Job Access](#): job-seeking support service for young people with disability
- [Australian Apprenticeships](#)
- [Paying for your education](#)
- [Tax File Number](#)
- [Australian Taxation Office \(ATO\)](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman](#)
- [Workforce Australia](#): support finding work and getting job ready
- [Job search online learning](#): online modules to build job search and application skills



# Programs and supports: Health and wellbeing

[The DCJ website](#) has an expansive list of programs, supports and services under this section. The website is regularly updated, so it's the best place to find information.

When developing a leaving care plan, consider all aspects of health and how they will be managed when the young person leaves care. This may include:

- Managing chronic illness or ongoing complex issues
- Affordability of ongoing medication and how to get prescriptions
- Family planning and contraception options
- Dental work and ongoing costs for preventative dental care
- Optical health care costs and regular checks
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and education about health risk factors now and in the future
- How to get support if dealing with health issues and unable to work or study.

Encourage young people to visit the [Youth Hub](#) on the NSW Government website for useful information about [health, safety and wellbeing](#).



# Programs and supports: Legal matters

Young people leaving out-of-home care may require more legal supports than many of their peers. It is important that they feel supported through understanding their rights and where to seek support if needed.

Young people in OOHC are more likely to be involved in the Youth Justice system, and/or be victims of crime. It is important to recognise that trauma can often lead to risk taking or challenging behaviours, and your role as caseworker is key in supporting young people in overcoming these challenges and building a brighter future.

The experiences of each care leaver are unique, and so can be the support they need. You can build a strong foundation by developing young people's knowledge of their rights, and confidence in advocating for themselves.

Here are a few things to support their transition to independence:

- [Documents and records: passport, birth certificate, proof of age card, driving licence](#)
- [Charter of rights for care leavers](#)
- [Access to records of their time in care](#)
- [Victims of crime support](#)
- [Legal help.](#)

The [DCJ website](#) has links to services and information to support young people with their legal matters.



# Programs and supports: Financial assistance

The financial assistance included in the leaving care and aftercare plans can make a significant difference for young people. Apart from the ongoing allowances in this table, a financial plan should also include one-off contingencies that allow young people to achieve the goals in their plan. Some things to consider:

- Only include funding for things that are planned and expected to occur. Remind care leavers that plans can always be reviewed and changed as needed.
- Base all financial assistance on individual needs and circumstances. In some cases, this will require out-of-guidelines approval.
- Include a clear and sufficient rationale and context for each financial need. Assessment and analysis are key skills in financial planning.
- Be flexible. Expect changes in circumstances before and after the financial plan has been approved.
- Keep in regular contact with care leavers – remember they may not find it easy asking for help.

The [DCJ website](#) has links to services and information on financial assistance, including the [Guidelines for leaving and aftercare assistance](#).

## ALLOWANCES OVERVIEW

	CARER	YOUNG PERSON	
< 18	Teenage Education Payment	ABSTUDY	Transition to Independent Living Allowance
18 - 20	Staying on Allowance	Independent Living Allowance	
	Post Care Education Financial Support (18-24)	Youth Allowance	
21 - 25		Aftercare Allowance	
> 25		Austudy	

# Case studies



## EKA'S PLAN

Regular aftercare contact with Eka allowed an abusive relationship to be quickly identified and dealt with. Pre-planned options and help with the cost of utilities including electricity and internet allowed Eka to escape the relationship and move to safe accommodation.



## FIONA'S PLAN

Establishing Fiona and her baby in suitable accommodation at higher than usual costs illustrates the principle of tailoring assistance to the level of need. It demonstrates how higher amounts than those in the Guidelines delegation may be approved if assessment determines they are required.



## HALA'S PLAN

This example illustrates the poor practice of including expenses for which there is no current need or immediate likelihood. This type of plan is often based on the use of templates where anything that is mentioned in the Guidelines is included in case it is ever needed. Such plans are not individually tailored.



## JOE'S PLAN

The NDIA and DCJ have worked together to support Joe, as a care leaver with disability, to give him the best chance of achieving his goals. His plan considers a wide range of supports including the coordination needed to manage his NDIS plan.

Read the full case studies and more on the [DCJ website](#)



# Contact details for aftercare support

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Encourage young people to seek support if they need it, even after they have left care. Include these details in their leaving care plan.

They can contact:

- The caseworker at DCJ or the agency who managed their case.
- Their local [DCJ Community Services Centre](#).
- The Care Leavers Line on 1800 994 686 or [careleavers@dcj.nsw.gov.au](mailto:careleavers@dcj.nsw.gov.au)

