

About After Care

What is After Care?

After care is ongoing support a young person receives from the age of 18 up to 25 years after they have legally left out-of-home care.

Why is it important?

Ideally, the young person has a strong support network and safe family connections that have grown during their time in care. However, many young people can leave care feeling isolated and with not many people to turn to for support.

As a result, young care leavers may be at increased risk of a range of poor social, educational and health outcomes including homelessness, mental illness, unemployment, substance misuse, contact with the justice system and early parenthood.¹

Young people normally have the support of their family in adulthood, young people leaving care need to know they have someone to turn to for support and advice.

It's critical young people who need support, have a caseworker checking how they are going. They need to know who and how to make contact if things change for them or if there is a problem.

Key messages

- The [Guidelines for the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care](#) guide the support you provide
- After care is the responsibility of the FSP with DCJ supporting financial costs of activities contained in the Leaving Care Plan
- Before they leave care, discuss and plan with the young person how they will be supported after care, including the supports they need

¹ Campo & Commerford 2016

- Be there for the young person when things change and encourage them to seek advice and support
- After developing the Leaving Care Plan be active in providing support. Help them build support networks and family relationships
- Consider the transition to adult services and local supports that match the young person's capacity, preferences and needs
- Check in on a young person after they turn 18. This might be a phone call or visiting their new apartment or meeting them for a coffee. Ask them how things are. You can use this conversation to identify any concerns and help divert a situation from escalating into crisis or a young person from becoming homeless
- Be prepared for when things change and respond positively to young people. They count on you!

Who provides support?

The Funded Service Provider (FSP) that last case managed the young person upon leaving care is primarily responsible for the young person's after care support. This gives them some continuity.

Financial costs associated with the plan are provided by the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), however all submissions or plans seeking financial costs must be approved by DCJ. Financial assistance covered may include:

- obtaining accommodation
- education and training
- obtaining legal advice
- finding employment
- accessing health services
- counselling and support.

Young people can also call the the **Careleavers Line on 1800 994 686**.

It's critical that we don't turn young people away when they seek help and advice. That may be a referral to a more tailored service. Timely support is vital, even if the caseworker hasn't worked with the young person before.

Supports and connections

Connect the young person through warm referrals, information, resources and supporting early appointments and connections. This can mean better outcomes for the young person and strengthen their engagement with other people and services. The caseworker should explain any other types of after care support available, including local services. For example, referral to early parenting programs or young adult mental health support.

This must be done prior to the young person leaving care and included in the young person's Leaving Care Plan.

Responding to changing needs

Leaving Care Plans are not static documents. Expect to amend the plan as the young person's circumstances change. For example:

- wanting to go to TAFE or university at 19
- help with tradie clothing
- learning to drive
- early parenthood
- domestic violence
- homelessness

Be ready to be there for aftercare support and work with other services to respond and advocate for the young person.

What else do caseworkers need to do?

Other responsibilities for FSP caseworkers include:

- supporting the young person to access applications for Centrelink, study scholarships, Smart and Skilled and other opportunities and payments
- assisting with Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA) and supporting young people to understand value for money
- teaching young people about freecycle, secondhand furniture stores etc
- referrals to other agencies including counselling and therapeutic supports

- developing and implementing plans to meet their needs for housing, education, health, budgeting, parenting, legal issues
- applying for identity documents and helping with their 100 points of ID
- accessing their DCJ file - talk to the young person about when they are ready and ensure they are supported if reading their files
- access to mental health, wellbeing support and drug and alcohol support
- accessing NDIS support including ensuring they have a guardian if needed
- strengthening relationships with birth family and extended family and building positive personal support networks such as through trusted safe adults and sporting clubs, youth groups etc
- establishing appropriate peer and community networks

Release of information to children and young people

Specific information that DCJ or former carers have must be provided to the young person when their care orders expire as well as items that have been purchased for them whilst in care, or if they have not been provided, during after care.

Some of these items may include:

Birth certificate and key documents	Proof or Confirmation of Aboriginality
Medicare card Medical and other health information	Photographs and memorabilia
Clothing	Personal items and life story work
Furniture, bedding and sporting items	Electrical including TV, iPad, mobile phone