Building referrals and connections into the leaving care plan and aftercare support can strengthen the quality of the plan and help ‘make real’ the actions of support for the young person and tailor help and support to their needs, capacity, skills and goals. Plan and connect young people early to address gaps or promote strengths.

Assessing what the young person needs or hopes to achieve is the first step, however, ensuring ways to ‘make the plan real’ may include warm referrals and connections to other services and programs. Your own networking with government or community organisations will boost opportunities for referrals in the local area and help you discover existing and new initiatives that might assist.

What kind of referrals should I include?

Each leaving care plan will look different and therefore the types of referrals or connections you include will be different, depending on the young person’s needs and goals. Some examples might include:

**Housing:** Plan early for housing if the young person is unlikely to continue staying with their carer. Finding housing options may require you to advocate and refer to programs like Rent Choice Youth, Foyer Central or taking the young person to visit private rental options. Build networks with local housing teams or providers and real estate agents may help you refer and find suitable rental options and programs for a young person e.g. how to maintain a residence.

**Health and Wellbeing:** Consider referrals to health services such as Family Planning NSW, Headspace or Beyond Blue. Become familiar with available services in your area. Use HS Net and network with colleagues to discover options. Some young people need support and advice regarding their identity and sexuality. Services such as [Twenty10](https://www.twenty10.org.au/) and [Qlife](https://qlife.org.au/) can help young people with questions they may have. If a young person in care is expecting, or has a baby, consider referrals to young parenting programs, young mums playgroups and help with arranging child care.

**Mentoring, training and employment:** Warm referrals to tailored mentoring programs such as the [Ladder Step Up program](https://www.ladder.org.au/ladder-step-up-sydney), [Boys To The Bush](https://boystothebush.org.au/) and [ID KNOW YOURSELF](https://idknowyourself.com/) can assist with building confidence and strengthening opportunities for re-engaging with school, employment and training. Check out [Smart and Skilled government funded courses](https://www.courses.com.au/government-funding/smart-and-skilled?gclid=EAIaIQobChMI_uektPqu8AIVlQ4rCh1YKQHPEAAYAiAAEgKF-vD_BwE), HSC boot camps and tutoring. Consider how to build local partnerships to help deliver living skills or driving hours to care leavers.

**Specialist Aftercare Services:** Young people with complex needs who require intensive assistance can receive the help they need from a [Specialist Aftercare Service](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/out-of-home-care/children-in-oohc/planning-for-your-future-and-support-after-care). You can also work in partnership with these services to support a young person.

**More information:** Listings above are current at time of publishing. Visit the [DCJ website](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/leaving-care-planning/resources-for-caseworkers) leaving care section for up to date information and resources to support referrals when planning for a young person’s transition to independence. Also the Care Leavers Line (1800 994 686 or careleaversline@facs.nsw.gov.au) and [*Your Next Step*](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/319362/Your-Next-Step.pdf) are handy resources for young people.