

LEAVING CARE PLANNING: PRACTICE TIPS FOR CASEWORKERS

Background

Leaving care planning is a critical requirement for providers who are funded to support young people in statutory care under the Permanency Support Program. Yet recent data suggests that not every young person who needs one currently has a leaving care plan.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has consulted with ACWA and developed the following information and practice tips for managers and caseworkers who are providing support to young people in care as they prepare for transition to adulthood from care.

In addition to this information, it is recommended caseworkers seek further training and advice from within their agency to build their skills and practice in leaving care planning.

Preparing young people for leaving care

The PSP Leaving Care funding package can be activated as the young person approaches the age of 15. This enables caseworkers to spend time with the young person to develop their plan, including what supports they'll need, in accordance with the [PSP foster care service overview](#) and the [OCG Child Safe Standards](#).

Good quality plans are hopeful and realistic, and informed by conversations with the young person about their goals and wishes for the future.

Caseworkers should assess the young person's strengths, needs and their capacity. What do they need to better prepare for adulthood? E.g. developing living skills or social skills, additional help with learning, thinking ahead about living arrangements, growing their personal support networks or support to learn to drive.

Plan early, with conversations over time

Planning early can ensure teenagers have time to develop living skills, get the support they need for school engagement and completion, and be able to develop their personal support network or 'forever network' to last beyond their time in care. It also allows time to consider living arrangements and housing options with input from the young person and people significant in their lives.

Plans should be tailored, practical and include referrals and support

A personalised plan is developed from 15 years (this is when the 'goal' changes in ChildStory to 'leaving care plan'). It can be 'finalised' as the young person reaches 18 (including details about financial supports, living arrangements and how support will be provided). Plans should be tailored and include practical support, referrals and detail how and what support will be provided to achieve goals.

Talk to your team about the importance of good practice when it comes to leaving care planning.

Identify capacity and gaps and get in early with supports, referrals and connection building.

Strengthening practice and knowledge

Below are practical guides, videos and resources for caseworkers and managers

- <https://psplearninghub.com.au/topic/leaving-care-after-care-additional-resources/>
- [Leaving Care Videos](#) – tips and ideas for caseworkers
- [Your Next Step](#) – is a guide to help young people transition to independence
- [Leading The Way](#) – a guide for carers of teenagers
- [Guidelines for the provision of assistances after leaving out of home care](#)
- [Care Leavers Charter of Rights](#)
- [Transitioning from Care – Planning to Leave Care – CCWT training workshop](#)

Give young people a copy of their 'final' plan and explain who is going to help them achieve what is in the plan. It is important for them to know that they are not alone.

Remember to follow up with the young person about how they are doing post-18. This is good practice and helps to identify 'flags', so issues can be addressed and not escalate into crisis. This can be done either in person, or virtually.

When things change

The plan can and should be updated as the young person's needs change until age 25. This could be anything from deciding to learn to drive at 19, beginning university at 22, becoming a parent, or needing help and assistance during a crisis.

NSW has a 'no wrong door' policy for care leavers - it means that young people can approach any DCJ Community Service Centre, their non-government service provider, the Care Leavers Line on 1800 994 686, or a [Specialist Aftercare service](#), and expect to receive assistance, advice and referral.

More information about PSP funding packages visit

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/deliver-bsp/about>