

Guiding principles for leaving care planning

While many children or young people who come into care find a permanent solution through restoration, guardianship or open adoption, there are some young people who remain in care until they reach 18 years of age.

Leaving care (or future) planning prepares these young people for life as an adult and provides support until they reach 25. Building rapport and engaging with the young person to understand their needs and strengths is critical.

The following principles are applied to leaving care planning to help and support care leavers achieve the best possible outcomes.

PRINCIPLES

Outcomes – similar expectations and outcomes as peers

Domains – all life domains are addressed

Transition over time – early plan, ongoing implementation

Plan – comprehensive, consultative and tailored

Implement – support, review and adjust



Confident, resilient, independent adults with a real sense of choice and control

Outcomes - similar expectations and outcomes as peers

Care leavers are supported to reach their full potential as young adults with similar expectations and outcomes as their peers in a conventional family setting.

Encouragement and support is provided to build confidence and life skills and achieve education and employment goals in line with personal capability and aspirations.

Opportunities that improve future prospects are identified and promoted (e.g. apprenticeships, scholarships).

Domains - all life domains are addressed

A holistic approach is taken addressing all seven domains of the [NSW Human Services Outcomes Framework](#).

This includes essentials such as safety, health and housing but also domains where there are sometimes different experiences or challenges for care leavers.

A sense of identity is particularly important as are connection to family, culture and community and a strong, personal support network.

Transition over time - early plan, ongoing implementation

The transition to independence is a gradual process with preparation and planning starting at 15 and ongoing support as needed until 25 years of age.

Expiration of the care order at 18 is not an end point for the transition.

Assistance from the agency that knows the young person and develops the plan with them continues in a seamless progression to ensure successful implementation.

Support includes helping the young person connect or reconnect with caring adults (family and/or significant others) that can provide a support network into adulthood.

Plan - comprehensive, consultative, tailored

Plans are developed in partnership with the young person to reflect their goals and are based on needs and strengths.

Consultation may also include carers, family and significant people in the young person's life.

Details are included about who will do what and when rather than non-specific 'feel good' statements.

Alternatives and fall back options are included so the care leaver is prepared for if events do not go as planned or circumstances change.

Implement - support, review, adjust

Implementation is more than tick a box. Access to support is facilitated by whatever means are necessary which may include direct service provision, referral, advocacy, brokerage or steps to remove barriers.

Agencies continuously monitor the plan to see that it is being implemented as intended, identify new issues or changes to circumstances and provide appropriate supports and referrals - updating the plan as required.

Regular, scheduled follow-up contact is maintained to identify and address emerging issues before they escalate.

Goal

Leaving care planning should strive for confident, resilient, independent adults in control of their lives.

This is reflected by:

- Engagement in future planning with a sense of pride, ownership and empowerment
- A stable income and safe, secure accommodation
- Increased numbers of young people engaged in higher education
- Positive, long-lasting relationships
- Strong self-esteem, confidence and resilience
- The capacity to find and access help if needed.

These principles support the [NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care](#)