

Supporting young people in statutory care to obtain a driver licence

Why is it important to help young people in care obtain a licence?

The ability to drive reduces social exclusion and improves access to education and employment. Having a licence also boosts self-esteem and gives a sense of independence. These are all important to care leavers and help them to feel in control of their lives.

It is for these reasons that, provided they are ready, young people are helped to obtain their provisional licence before they leave care.

It is also likely that while living with the foster family there will be greater access to a car and licenced driver for learners to build up hours for their log book.

What help can be provided?

Steps towards obtaining a licence start early. While undertaking leaving care or 'Future' planning, caseworkers will talk to the young person and carers about the assistance that can be provided. This may include a contribution to costs (e.g. for driving lessons) in accordance with individual circumstances such as:

- readiness to learn
- access to a private vehicle in which to practice
- the availability of transport options.

Carers and young people themselves should also think about what is needed and where there are opportunities such as help from friends or mentors who may be able to offer lessons and or the use of a car.

Not everyone is ready to become a driver at an early age so assistance can be provided to obtain a licence until a care leaver reaches 25 years. FACS and out-of-home care caseworkers can provide information about assistance after a young person has left care.

Free Safer Drivers course

Young people who are or were in care and are learning to drive can participate in a Safer Drivers Course for free (usually this costs \$140). The benefits include building confidence about road safety, learning practical safer driving skills and receiving 20 hours of supervised logbook driving time. Caseworkers can support the application for no-cost access to this course. Search for *Safer Drivers Course* on facs.nsw.gov.au for eligibility conditions and how to apply for young people with a care experience.