

Living Arrangement Agreement Discussion Guide

Guide for Caseworkers

Use this discussion guide with the attached Living Arrangement Agreement template when talking with a young person leaving care and carer/family or significant adults about living arrangements and planning for where the young person will live.

The agreement is voluntary and best used in situations where there is willingness and interest but where there are identified barriers preventing the living arrangement from being extended or established.

What are the benefits to having the agreement?

The agreement is a way to stabilise, establish or extend a living arrangement that is generally semi-independent or family like. The discussion and agreement helps the young person and carer/significant adult to agree on how living together will work. It enables the young person to remain living in a supported environment while developing further skills and capacity to live independently.

Benefits include:

- ✓ Stable living arrangements remain in place, are extended or established
- ✓ Enables the young person to remain connected to community and friends
- ✓ Reduces the risk of homelessness and allows more time for the young person to strengthen their living skills and establish themselves in other ways, for example, complete a traineeship or completing driving hours
- ✓ Delays the need for alternative accommodation.

Please note that leaving care does not mean the young person has to leave the carer's home.

Getting started: Review the template and discussion guide.

- *Talk separately to the young person and carer/trusted adult to understand the level of willingness and interest. Identify any barriers or reservations. Sometimes simple things get in the way of a young person staying on. For example, a misunderstanding about contributions to household costs or the freedom, rights and responsibilities they will have as an adult.*
- *If appropriate then seek interest in a meeting to discuss the Agreement.*
- *Ask the young person to think about any questions they want to raise.*
- *Use the guide to facilitate the discussion and complete the Living Arrangement Agreement template.*



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Paying rent or board: The carer needs to confirm if rent or board is required and what it will include and how much they expect. Is it fair or reasonable and what does it include? Rent or board normally covers water usage, heating and electricity.

How much the young person can pay will depend on if they are working, if they receive the youth allowance or other support and what costs they have?

- *Does the young person feel prepared or need assistance to budget for rent?*
- *Are they clear about what it includes and when to pay?*

If they agree on paying rent the young person may need help to set up an automatic payment. This will create an electronic record and ensure the young person pays on the due date. If the young person needs help setting this up tell them they can speak to you or their bank.

Other bills that may not be covered in the rent: Discuss any other bills or shared costs such as internet data cap fees that the young person may need to contribute to. What is the expectation?

Allowances: The young person leaving care should already be aware of what appropriate financial assistance they may receive to help them contribute to any rent or board. Caseworkers can review the [Leaving and Aftercare financial assistance Information for care leavers aged up to 25 years](#) and the [Guidelines for the provision of assistance after leaving out of home care](#).

Positive efforts towards independence: Discuss how the carer can support the young person's transition to independence (in the context of living together). This may include learning life skills like cooking together or understanding more about financial literacy.

Helping out around the home (chores): Doing chores helps young people learn basic household management skills and teaches basic courtesy, such as not leaving a mess in shared living spaces.

- *Discuss how the young person is able to contribute to the home, such as what chores, how often and when.*
- *Discuss how in a shared house people may take turns to do regular chores such as cleaning, taking out the garbage and washing, folding and putting away laundry.*
- *Discuss if a schedule is needed to make it clear for everyone in the home.*

Mutual respect and boundaries: Being responsible and treating each other with honesty and respect is an important discussion. Talk to the young person about what is acceptable behaviour and what isn't for example, not swearing or making threats.

- *Discuss boundaries and personal space such as respecting each other's privacy and knocking on bedroom doors.*
- *Talk about ways to raise any issues in a constructive way.*
- *The carer may be struggling with how much or how little support the young person needs or wants. Discuss how does this might impact on living together?*



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Quiet time and having guests: Talk to the young person and carer about how basic courtesy and open communication will help everyone get along in the home.

Have a conversation about whether there are any set quiet hours and what the expectations are around what communication is expected regarding:

- *Noise*
- *Coming home late*
- *Having friends over*
- *Any other issues around guests and household logistics.*

Substance use: What is the position about illegal substances, alcohol and cigarette use or possession, is it allowed within the house or on the property?

- *Discuss limits or guidance around alcohol and tobacco use.*
- *Does the young person have concerns about other people in the house taking substances?*
- *Let the young person and carer know that they can use their communication skills to express their feelings and wishes, for example, for all people living in the house to smoke outside.*

Live-in or visiting children: If the young person has children or siblings who stay or visit, remind them that it is their responsibility to look after the children in the home e.g. cleaning up after making food, washing dirty clothes etc.

- *Encourage the young person and carer to discuss any questions or rules about live-in or visiting children.*
- *Flag if there are any safety issues to discuss such as ensuring the pool fence is closed or using a safety gate near stairs.*

When things don't work out: Talk to the young person and carer about how to resolve issues when things don't work out.

- *Discuss ways to resolve problems that are highlighted in the agreement. Remind both the young person and the carer that the agreement is a way forward to support them living together. Highlight local services and supports relevant to the young person (as per Leaving and Aftercare supports).*
- *Talk about your future role if problems arise or if things don't work out - will you still be in contact with the young person as part of their aftercare support and can they reach out to you? Are there any other trusted adults who can help mediate if that is needed?*
- *Highlight to the carer how they can contact you, another support person, or service if they have worries or safety concerns for the young person.*

If possible the carer should provide four weeks' notice if the arrangement needs to change. This will allow the young person time to seek assistance and support with finding accommodation. The young person should, where possible, give the carer at least two weeks' notice if they plan to move out. Discuss this and explain why giving notice is respectful to the other person.



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Working with Children's Check: Is there a child or young person in care in the house hold? Consider if a [Working with Children's Check](#) is required by the young person when they turn 18.

Sign the agreement: If both the young person and carer/family member/significant adult are comfortable and happy with the agreement then they should sign and date the agreement. The young person could take a photo of the agreement using their phone or ensure each person has a copy.

A copy of the Living Arrangement Agreement can be attached to the young person's Leaving Care Plan in ChildStory. The Agreement may be used when the young person is turning 18 OR at any time if it may help secure a positive living arrangement.

The Agreement is not needed in every situation but can support an open discussion that strengthens the relationship between carers and young people and leads to stable living arrangements.