

Casework Practitioner's guide to Leaving Care and Aftercare

15 years	16 years	17 years	18 – 24 years
Start the Leaving Care Plan – update the 'goal' in ChildStory to Leaving care	Review and update the Independent Living Skills Checklist . Discuss how skills will be developed or addressed e.g. with young person, carer, others	Review and update the Independent Living Skills Checklist	"Finalise" the leaving care plan (now the aftercare plan) and financial elements with any further changes. Provide a copy of the plan
Assess the young person's strengths, skills, capacity and needs – use the Independent Living Skills Checklist	Assist with setting up a bank account and obtaining a Tax File Number and promote financial literacy skills	Support action needed if Permanency is intended If needed, apply for Guardian and/or Financial Manager	Remind the young person they can return at any time if things change (discuss the Care Leavers line and aftercare supports)
Give the young person <i>Your Next Step</i> and <i>Go Your Own Way</i> and the carer <i>Leading the Way - these can be good discussion starters!</i>	Arrange Youth Allowance and help with financial literacy and budgeting skills	Submit Aftercare financial plan to CFDU minimum six months prior to turning 18 (check <i>Guidelines for provision of assistance Leaving and Aftercare</i>)	Connect young people with complex needs to a specialist aftercare provider (and provide leaving care plan)
Submit referral for a legal audit (via the CFDU) to DCJ Legal	Discuss options of a Network meeting or Family Group Conferencing. Establish safe connections that might last beyond their time in care e.g. netball club	Apply for any financial support (e.g. TILA) and consider entitlements and contingency plans. Discuss the status of any Victims of Crime application and prepare for any recognition payment if expected	Provide personal records (e.g. original documents and Life Story Work) and access to files about their time in care
PSP providers can activate specialist funding packages <i>Leaving care and 15+ years old reconnect</i>	Seek support options for lessons and guidance to obtain driver licence	Assist the young person to enrol to vote, get their Proof of age card and passport	Help to access appropriate funding from Centrelink or other sources
Conduct Family Finding and/or establish or grow the young person's support network that can last them beyond their time in care	Provide full Genogram	Support school attendance and completion and consider additional support e.g. tutoring, homework centres, HSC boot camps etc.	Make referrals to any young adult services e.g. RISE UP (NSW Police), Ladder, mentoring, Family Planning
Encourage CREATE membership	Arrange Certificate of Aboriginality (keep with birth certificate)	Prepare the Minister's letter (send to CFDU minimum six months prior to turning 18)	Assist with home establishment
Talk through the Care Leavers' Charter of Rights	Assist applications for NDIS, SIL, SDA if needed (collect required documents)	Assist with scholarship applications and other educational opportunities as well as employment options or work experience	Discuss support networks and assistance to age 25
Discuss with the young person their hopes and expectations for the future	Organise permanent residence in Australia or rights to citizenship if needed (check status at age 17)	Assist with living arrangements and Housing options/application	

Good leaving care planning:

- The plan is tailored and explains support and addresses gaps and needs while in care and their goals for the future
- Reflects strong engagement with the young person and other people in their lives
- Taps into their strengths, skills and hopes and offers opportunities to grow, explore and be the person they want to be
- Demonstrates their connection with a range of people (e.g. family, carers, friends, teachers, coaches) and the building of personal support networks
- Is realistic, goal setting and hopeful, includes steps to build life skills and allows for flexibility if something changes

The building blocks to transition to independence

Be money smart

- Discuss budgeting and saving and the pitfalls of afterpay and credit cards and scams.
- Discuss finances, including Youth Allowance, TILA, pay tax and how to open and manage accounts.
- Talk about the importance of protecting money, the use of financial advisor or a plan if they are to receive money when they turn 18 (Victims Support or inheritance etc.)

Setting realistic and achievable goals

- Help the young person to develop a vision for their future based on their strengths and interests, and to set goals to achieve it.
- Setting goals helps to develop a positive self-image and for some young people is important for overcoming the stigma of being in care.

Knowledge of legal rights and responsibilities

- Confirm they have 100-point identity documentation and know how to protect their personal information.
- Help them enrol to vote prior to turning 18 years.
- Provide information about their rights under the law and where to get advice.
- Do they have any fines? Would a WDO be helpful?

Experiencing culture

- Develop, implement and monitor a cultural plan to support their cultural needs – create it to help maintain meaningful connections with family, community, culture and language.
- Support the carer and young person to access cultural information and resources.

Building life skills

- Are they developing age-appropriate skills?
- How are their living skills, communication and social skills?
- Do they know about personal care and hygiene, nutrition and cooking, cleaning, using public transport, shopping, planning ahead for short term and long term goals, choosing school subjects or TAFE course to match a career choice, rental obligations and how to learn to drive and get a driver licence?

Learning during school or TAFE

- Engage with the school during education planning meetings and to address any underlying issues.
- How are they performing at school? Do they need help from a tutor? How can you help them cope with exam stress?
- Do they have everything needed for school? Text books, course materials, apprenticeship tools, other supplies?
- Teenage Education Payment or Post Care Education Financial Support to support school and stability.
- Discuss study options, university and TAFE, accessing a Smart and Skilled fee free scholarship - help with applications.

Career management

- Help them develop resume writing and job seeking skills.
- Have they received career advice?

Improving health and wellbeing

- Review and update their Health Record and Health plan. Do they have a health care card?
- Can they monitor their own health, treat minor injuries, access a GP, provide details of their medical history and correctly use medication?
- Do they need help finding reliable health information and knowing when to seek professional help?
- Do they have access to information about sexual development and sexual health and safety (including safe sex, contraception, consent and respect and can they identify exploitation)?
- Do they understand the impact of substance misuse and risk-taking behaviour? If needed, help develop alternatives, self-control and minimisation strategies.
- Address any issues arising from their past including traumatic experiences. Create a welcoming and non-shaming environment for them to talk with you.
- Address issues of grief, loss, dislocation and isolation etc. associated with removal.
- Encourage participation in *My Life Story* – record personal and education achievements they can look back on with pride.
- Do they know about online safety issues and privacy settings, protecting passwords and the dangers of posting, tweeting or snapchatting inappropriate content or photos? It may come back to haunt them. Also, do they understand the risks of sexting or sending nude pictures?
- Are they exploring their sexual or gender identity? Offer support such as The Gender Centre or other organisations.
- Talk about the topics of anxiety, depression, self-harm, eating disorders, social phobia or other mental health concerns. Don't wait until after you see signs, try to be proactive about mental health. Provide access to counselling services.
- Help them to maintain a positive outlook and develop resilience and coping strategies, how to pick yourself back up and avoid sinking into negative thoughts. How can you help them know how to make positive choices and work to achieve their goals?
- Can they deal with peer pressure? Talk with them and their carer about how wanting to fit in or be accepted should not override consideration of whether a relationship is harmful.
- Help them understand that domestic violence is more than just physical (emotional, financial, social etc.) Can they identify the warning signs and know how to get help?

Seeking suitable housing

- Approach a conversation about the young person. staying on with their carer and addressing any obstacles
- If the young person does not intend to stay in their current home, talk about options and finding housing.
- Do they understand tenancy rights and obligations?
- Will they need Rent Choice Youth?
- Can and do they want to live alone?

Forming lifelong connections

- Review the adequacy of contact arrangements.
- Identify the young person's interests and find opportunities to increase connections.
- Facilitate access to group activities and social events.
- Encourage healthy and safe post-care birth family relationships (if appropriate) that can support the young person when they transition to independence.

Planning together

- Involve the young person and carer in decision making.
- Explain the leaving care process, everyone must know their role and what to do.
- Discuss timeframes and what they can expect from you.
- Consider contingency plans and give the young person the Care Leavers line (1800 994 686).

Personal and social growth

- Do they need help to develop a positive self-image?
- Focus on their strengths and achievements.
- Identify interests and encourage participation in activities to reduce the risk of isolation.