



# Fact Sheet: Supporting young people turning 18 during the COVID-19 pandemic

## This Fact Sheet:

- Highlights the importance of high quality leaving care planning with young people. This is even more critical during the current COVID-19 pandemic.
- Outlines a range of supports available through the leaving care planning process and how to access them

## The importance of good leaving care planning

Now, more than ever, young people who are leaving, or have recently left care, really need our support. We must help young people through the [leaving care planning process](#) in any way we can and provide high quality aftercare support.

During this time it's essential that leaving care plans focus on stability for young people. In most cases, it is better that the young person remains living where they are. If that's not possible, they must have an alternative safe living option planned.

Caseworkers should facilitate constructive discussions between young people and carers. Particularly, to agree on the financial contributions young people will make to the household as adults. This is a key element of leaving care planning.

It's also important to consider any extra mental health and other support that the young person may need. This might include helping the young person to stay connected, by ensuring they have access to a laptop or iPad. Ensure young people are linked into counselling and support such as [Beyond Blue](#), [Lifeline](#) and other suitable services.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) will be flexible when approving leaving care and aftercare support expenses. Especially where approval of these may support young people through this particularly challenging time. This might mean more support is included in a leaving care plan to ensure stable housing and equipment to stay connected, or support with food vouchers or transport. Expenses must still align with the [Ministerial Guidelines](#).

## Support for young people funded by DCJ through the leaving care process

Please ensure that you've considered the range of existing supports available through the leaving care planning process. Especially for young people who are about to turn, or have recently turned, 18.

*Help is provided by a fortnightly aftercare allowance and/or one-off payments for contingencies. Payments must be consistent with the young person's leaving care plan and it's so important there's been a collaborative planning process.*

**Aftercare Allowance:** All young people who are doing full-time training or education - and would be at risk of homelessness without financial assistance - should receive the



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Aftercare Allowance. This allowance of \$230 per fortnight is provided for a three month period, reviewable at that time.

**Post Care Education Financial Support:** [Post Care Education Financial Support](#) provides financial help to carers who continue to support a young person in their home after they turn 18, while they complete their Year 12 or equivalent studies. To receive Post Care Education Financial Support:

- The carer must have been receiving a care allowance immediately before the young person turned 18, and
- The out-of-home care placement must have ended due to the young person turning 18, and
- The young person must be 18 to 24 years of age and live with the carer, and
- The young person must be studying full-time in order to complete Year 12 or equivalent studies, and
- The carer must live in NSW.

**Contingency payments:** One-off financial support outlined under the [Ministerial Guidelines](#) (the Guidelines) to help care leavers includes, but is not limited to:

- Getting accommodation
- Supporting education and training
- Getting legal advice
- Finding employment
- Accessing health and dental services
- Accessing counselling and mental health support.

A more flexible approach should be taken for contingency or one-off payments because of challenges introduced by COVID-19. This includes communications equipment such as a laptop or tablet and related costs such as internet and mobile phone services. Young people may also need other support. This might include food vouchers, household products, baby supplies, delivery services or other day-to-day expenses. These types of expenses have always been available through the leaving care planning process but are more important right now.

Financial caps in the Guidelines have always been able to be exceeded on a case-by-case basis. Leaving care plans should include the amount of support that is needed irrespective of any indicated caps. Approval will still be on a case-by-case basis.

Normally, the Guidelines allow for up to 10 hours of professional counselling. This can be extended to 20 sessions with a referral from a general practitioner (GP). However, during COVID-19, any number of counselling sessions may be approved without a referral from a GP.

**Specialist aftercare services:** DCJ funds [nine specialist aftercare services](#) who can support care leavers with more complex needs.

**Practical support:** Practical support should be given to ensure that young people apply for, and get help to access the universal services to which they are entitled. This includes



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but is not limited to the [Transition to Independent Living Allowance \(TILA\)](#) and [Centrelink allowances](#) outlined below.

**Administration of these measures:** All eligible young people should already have a leaving care plan in place. If this is not the case, one should be developed immediately in consultation with the young person in accordance with the [Guidelines](#) and the [NSW Care Leavers Charter](#).

If you're a non-government service provider, see the streamlined [application form and checklist](#). This will help you ensure that all forms of aftercare assistance funded by DCJ has been included in a young person's leaving care plan where appropriate.

*Remember the Care Leavers line too - it provides free financial, educational, social and legal help, Phone 1800 994 686 or email [CareLeavers@fac.s.nsw.gov.au](mailto:CareLeavers@fac.s.nsw.gov.au).*

## Allowances and payments available to young people

Allowance or payment	Description
Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)	One-off payment up to \$1,500. The usual process continues where in NSW the caseworker applies using the <a href="#">NSW application form</a> and that is submitted to Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS). If the young person is unable to print and sign the application form, they may take a photo of their name and signature on a piece of paper and forward that to their caseworker. SYFS has agreed that this is acceptable under current circumstances, as is the caseworker's digital signature which is contained in their email.
JobSeeker Payment	Financial help for young adults aged 22 onwards. The <a href="#">JobSeeker payment</a> is available for people who are unemployed and looking for work, or doing approved activities to find a job. It's also for people who are sick or injured and can't do their usual work or study.
JobKeeper Payment	The <a href="#">JobKeeper payment</a> is a new payment for people who are employed but where their employment is affected by COVID-19. People in this situation should speak with their employer, they will advise if the young person is eligible to claim the JobKeeper payment.
Youth Allowance	The <a href="#">Youth Allowance</a> provides financial assistance to young people aged 24 or younger who are a student or apprentice, or to young people aged 21 or younger and looking for work.
ABSTUDY	<a href="#">ABSTUDY</a> is for Aboriginal students who are studying or undertaking an apprenticeship. ABSTUDY includes supports to cover the cost of study, housing, living expenses and travel.
Disability Support Pension	The <a href="#">Disability Support Pension</a> provides financial assistance to help young people with a permanent physical, intellectual or psychiatric condition that prevents them from working.
Youth Disability Supplement	The <a href="#">Youth Disability Supplement</a> is automatically applied to young people aged under 21, and who are receiving the Disability Support Pension.  Young people may also be eligible to receive the Youth Disability Supplement if they are aged under 22 and get either Youth Allowance or ABSTUDY.



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Allowance or payment	Description
Parenting payment	The <a href="#">Parenting Payment</a> is an income support payment for people who are a young child's main carer. This payment supports parents or guardians to help with the cost of raising children.
Child care subsidy	The <a href="#">Child Care Subsidy</a> is paid directly to a child care provider, the subsidy provides assistance to cover the cost of child care.