

# Aligning Career, Education and Leaving Care Planning Practice Guide

Career Practitioners, Designated Teachers, Child Protection Practitioners,  
Case Managers and Better Futures



'Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.'  
– Nelson Mandela



## CONTENTS

Introduction .....	3
Career Education Purpose .....	3
Leaving Care Purpose .....	4
Background .....	4
Department of Education and Training (DET) - Roles and Responsibilities .....	5
Education Policy .....	5
Engagement Checklist .....	5 - 6
Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Roles and Responsibilities ....	6 - 7
Better Futures - Roles and Responsibilities .....	8
Role of Carers in Supporting Career Education .....	9
Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement .....	10
Student Support Group .....	10
Learning Mentor .....	11
Student Voice .....	11
Overview of Plans Required for Students in OOHC .....	12 - 13
Planning Checklist .....	14
Leaving School and Care Continuum .....	15
Plan Templates .....	16
Resources .....	17
Practice Example .....	18 - 19



# Aligning Career, Education and Leaving Care Planning

## Introduction

The Aligning Career, Education and Leaving Care Planning Practice Guide has been developed to assist Career Practitioners, Designated Teachers and Case managers to understand and align education and leaving care based planning for secondary students in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) to support post school further education, training and employment.

This guide provides:

- an overview of the roles and responsibilities of professionals in the school, Child Protection and Better Futures sectors
- an overview of Career Education planning
- an overview of Leaving Care planning
- audit Checklist
- timeline of key actions
- additional Resources

## Career Education Purpose

Supporting transition from education and care begins early; preparation for career education planning begins in Year 7 and continues through each year of secondary school. Career education planning is one of the key building blocks for lifelong success, ensuring students are confident, capable and can successfully manage their careers by:

- understanding their interests, strengths and aspirations
- exploring how jobs and careers are changing, what work looks and feels like, and the range of opportunities available to them
- deciding the subjects and qualifications that suit them best and reflect industry needs, to take them beyond school to TAFE, university or meaningful employment.

### [Transforming career education](#)



## Leaving Care Purpose

To ensure young people leaving OOHC have optimal success, preparation needs to be considered as part of a continuous process of personal development, not as an event that starts only as a young person nears the end of their time in care. It is important that young people leaving care have the necessary support and skills to maximise their opportunities and feel ready and prepared to leave care.

[Care and transition planning for leaving care in Victoria – a framework and guide.](#)

Each young person who leaves an OOHC placement should do so in a planned and supported manner to enable a successful and sustainable transition.

Young people should have:

- ongoing opportunities over time to develop independent living skills
- involvement in decision-making
- a detailed post placement support (or after care) plan and
- essential documentation, possessions and life records.

Members of the young person's care team share responsibility for the preparation of the young person for independent living.

## Background

Many young people in care have experienced a range of trauma and adversity during their childhood, for example:

- neglect, abuse, family violence or breakdown,
- parental mental illness and substance misuse (including exposure to drugs or alcohol before birth)
- inconsistent parenting (including not being modelled positive ways of asserting their needs and resolving conflict)
- the (often-repeated) trauma of losing a loved and trusted care giver (these feelings of abandonment impact on children's capacity to form safe relationships with others)
- lack of a stable family and education due to moving in and out of care, placement breakdowns, poor kindergarten participation and school exclusions.

As a result of these experiences, children in care can react or behave in ways that carers and staff find confronting (for example, withdrawing or presenting in a way that is not expected for their age or development).



The culmination of these experiences and sometimes complex presentation places many children and young people in care at significant educational disadvantage. This disadvantage can be compounded by stigma that is often associated with being in OOHC and low educational expectations that some individuals hold for children in care.

However, being in OOHC does not need to define or limit a child's future. With the right support children and young people in OOHC can develop healthy relationships within their schools or early childhood services and communities, experience positive wellbeing and reach their educational potential. With good support and shared high expectations, children in OOHC can achieve highly in their education.

## Department of Education and Training (DET) - Roles and Responsibilities

### Education Policy

Every Victorian student has a legislated right to enrol at their designated neighbourhood school. Schooling is compulsory for students aged between 6 and 17 years.

Exemptions from school enrolment require an Exemption from School Application. To be granted an exemption the student must have a destination program that includes participation in approved education or training, or employment, or both, on a full time basis (an average of at least 25 hours per week).

Exemptions for students who have not completed Year 10 require approval from a Regional Director (DET). A copy of the student Career Action Plan must be provided.

Once an exemption has been granted, Victorian Government schools must maintain contact with the student while they are of compulsory school age. If the student's chosen pathway is unsuccessful, the school will be the first point of contact to either re-engage the student in school or explore an alternative pathway. This responsibility remains with the school while the student is of compulsory school age.

Disengagement from school is defined as lack of the following: participation, a feeling of inclusion and investment in learning (DET, 2020). The Keep Caring inquiry (2020) found that almost 44% of young people on the verge of leaving care are no longer studying or in any kind of training and face a high risk of long-term unemployment. Establishing positive engagement in education is one of the critical factors in addressing long term disadvantage and maximising life choices and pathways for students in OOHC.

### Engagement Checklist

- Individual Education Plan
- Student Attendance Improvement Plan
- Behaviour Support Plan
- Student Health Support Plan
- Student Support Group
- Modified timetable – focus on literacy and numeracy skill development



- Offer a school-based apprenticeship, including Headstart
- Explore Flexible Learning Options
- VET delivered to secondary students (VDSS)
- Structured workplace learning and work experience
- Explore re-engagement programs such as Operation Newstart, Hand Brake Turn, Myuna Farm or the Young Parent Education Program
- Consider a DET re-engagement contract with a smaller education provider
- Involvement from DET:
  - Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO)
  - Student Support Services (SSS)
  - Career Unit – career and pathway planning
  - Wellbeing team
  - School Focused Youth Service

## Department of Families, Fairness and Housing - Roles and Responsibilities

In Victoria, the Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (section 16) establishes a responsibility for the Secretary of the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to provide or arrange the provision of services to assist in supporting a person under the age of 21 years to gain the capacity to make the transition to independent living where:

- the Secretary has had parental responsibility for the person; and
- on the Secretary’s responsibility ending, the person is of an age, or intends, to live independently.

The care team of professionals supporting the young person (including child protection, education services and community services) is expected to actively participate in the process of regularly reviewing care and placement plans.

The Looking After Children (LAC) assessment and action record is a tool to assess developmental outcomes for young people in key life areas and can be followed up as part of the ongoing review processes in planning for the young person. The LAC assessment and action record must be completed annually for each young person in care. The assessment of living skills should consider the seven health and welfare dimensions of the LAC framework.

The child protection practitioner must ensure that a young person's case plan is reviewed as required and contains all decisions made that the Secretary considers significant.



Preparation and planning for leaving care should ideally commence two years prior to a young person's transition from care. Young people need time and experience to learn the skills necessary for successful independent living. Young people learn through observation, role modelling, practice and support during times of success and failure.

Conversations should commence with the young person about what they see themselves doing as an adult. These conversations should occur incrementally to allow the young person to deal with these life decisions in a supported manner.

Preparation for leaving care must be included as a component of case planning and include the following considerations:

- reunification with family
- an appropriate alternative long-term care environment, links into disability services if required
- remaining in the current care environment with a change of goals and timeframes for the placement, reflected in a revised placement agreement
- an independent or semi supported living situation, if the young person has sufficient living skills to safely sustain such an arrangement
- a less intensive care environment in the case of young people placed in intensive support care arrangements, particularly non-family based care and
- whether a review of the existing child protection order is required.

It is not appropriate to attempt to complete any tool, for example the LAC assessment and action record, in their entirety in one meeting with a young person. All interactions with the young person should contribute to the assessment being made and should be part of the dialogue. Every effort should be made not to overwhelm a young person with questions or to alienate them if they are not willing to engage in a particular discussion. A question in these circumstances could be asked about whom they talk to or whom could they speak to about certain areas (using the care team). The child protection practitioner must ensure that transition from care and assessment of living skills begins as early as possible (ideally two years) and is regularly reviewed as part of the case plan. In the case of young people with disabilities or high risk or challenging behaviours, consideration should be given to assessment commencing earlier and what specialist input may be required.



## Better Futures - Roles and Responsibilities

Better Futures aims to improve outcomes for young people transitioning from care to supported independence, up to the age of 21 years. It is guided by a Better Futures (Advantaged Thinking) practice framework and support is tailored to meet the individual needs of young people. All young people should be referred to Better Futures provider at 15 years and 9 months by their case manager, with an emphasis on early referral and smooth transition planning.

- Better Futures engages with young people and their support networks including case managers and care teams early in their transition from care and supports young people across five service offers: housing and living skills, education, employment, health and wellbeing and community connections. Young people are eligible to access a Better Futures service response from 15 years and 9 months until their 21st birthday.

Better Futures referrals are accepted by the following pathways:

- a nominated Better Futures provider
- an ACCO for Aboriginal young people; or
- a Better Futures provider who is the sole provider operating in the area; or
- other agreed local arrangements.

Young people in foster, kinship and residential care are eligible for Better Futures if they are subject to a family reunification order, a care by Secretary order or a long-term care order on or after their sixteenth birthday.

Following cessation of their order, young people can receive support up until 21 years of age. Young people can access flexible funding to support the achievement of their transition goals across housing and living skills, health and wellbeing, employment, education, and community connections.

Applications for flexible funding should be informed by the voice of the young person, and should help build their independence by, for example:

- connecting them to support networks, family, community and culture
- assisting them to develop and build on skills and experience that are right for them
- supporting access to information, advice and assistance that they may need.

At present, Better Futures flexible funding may not be available to young people on interim accommodation orders, permanent care orders or those in voluntary placements not subject to an order. Check with your provider for confirmation.



## Role of Carers in supporting career education

Research indicates that parents/carers are the single greatest influence on their child's education and career decisions. High carer/parental engagement can have a major impact on the young person's learning, so every opportunity should be explored to nurture family-school/organisation partnerships.

[Engaging Parents in Career Conversations \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)

### Education Guide for Carers - The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare:

[Education Guide for Carers of Children Living in Out-of-Home Care in Victoria - Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare \(cfecfw.asn.au\)](https://www.cfecfw.asn.au)

Carers involved in their child's learning will improve motivation, attendance and achievement. Carers are a significant role model. The priority and value they give to education will be important for young people in their engagement with learning. It is important that young people who have grown up or spent time in OOHC are encouraged and supported, like any other young person, to pursue and aspire to vocational and higher education, and develop their knowledge and skills through formal study and/or training. This will help prepare them for the next phase of their life and provide more options for meaningful employment and their career.

When talking about education and careers with a young person, carers are encouraged to:

- Focus on their strengths and areas of interest
- Encourage them to talk about their goals and aspirations – what they want for themselves and what they expect from themselves
- Listen and be open to their ideas
- Encourage discussion around areas of work and/or study, rather than specific jobs – unless they have a clear goal they want to work towards
- Remember it is their path – you will have your own ideas about the direction they should go in, empower them to make their decisions with your guidance
- Some young people have clear ideas about what they want to do, others will take longer to explore options and make decisions
- Encourage them to talk to a teacher, learning mentor or another trusted adult if that helps
- Be patient



## Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement

Students in OOHC require the following supports as mandated by the Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement:

- Individual Education Plan
- Student Support Group
- Education Needs Analysis
- Learning Mentor

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy>

### Student Support Group

The Student Support Group (SSG) is the key lever of plan alignment for students in OOHC. Partnership and collaboration between SSGs and Care Teams builds successful and smooth transition from school and care planning.

An SSG is a partnership between schools, parents/carers, the student and relevant agencies. The group works together to plan and support the educational, health, social, cultural and emotional wellbeing of students with diverse learning needs.

An SSG is responsible for developing and implementing an Individual Education Plan (IEP). SSGs are required for students in OOHC and meetings are held at least once a term.

SSGs should:

- clearly articulate individual and shared responsibilities
- be a strength-based model with a focus on the student's potential to achieve good educational, social and behavioural outcomes
- be supported and informed by other relevant plans such as a cultural plan or behaviour support plan
- aim to retain the student at school
- contain a record of important decisions and actions
- be reviewed regularly in accordance with the timeline as agreed by all members of the SSG (or at least once per term).

[Student Support Groups: Policy | education.vic.gov.au](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy)



## Learning Mentor

Through a strong relationship the Learning mentor helps the student to feel safe, supported and connected to school and learning. The Learning mentor is a role model, guide and advocate for the student – someone who knows them well and takes an interest in their life and learning. The Learning mentor demonstrates unconditional positive regard and holds high expectations and aspirations for the student. Learning Mentors are chosen in consultation with the students.

The role of the Learning Mentor is to:

- support the educational needs of the student
- support them to overcome barriers in their learning
- help them stay connected to their schooling
- act as a role model, guide and advocate for the child or young person
- know them well and take an interest in their life and learning.

[Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care : Resources | education.vic.gov.au](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/supporting-students-in-out-of-home-care-resources)

## Student Voice

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard within the family, the school or the community. Student participation in decision-making and having agency in learning is pivotal to positive academic and social outcomes. Participation leads to greater motivation in students, satisfaction in learning and a higher likelihood of academic success.

All parties should ensure that children and young people in OOHC are involved in decision-making and actions that affect them, including involvement in the SSG, the ENA process, development of their IEP and the selection of their Learning mentor (Out-of-Home-Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement).



## Overview of Plans Required for Students in OOHC

Plan	Description	Responsibility	Recommendations
<b>Career Action Plan (CAP)</b>  (Years 7 – 12)	A career action plan is a planning document owned and managed by young people intended to reflect their increased career development learning.  The plan helps young people:  set goals  clarify the actions needed to achieve the goals  commit to participating in planned activities	<b>DET</b>  Developed by students  Career Practitioners/Teachers have oversight	CAP goals reflected in Leaving Care Plan  CAP goals reflected in Individual Education Plan (IEP)
<b>Education Needs Analysis (ENA)</b>	The process of understanding and addressing a student’s social, emotional and cultural learning needs, as well as their strengths.  This involves collecting, reviewing and analysing personal, health, and educational information from a range of sources and determining the need for additional interventions and services	<b>DET</b>  Student Support Services Staff	ENA recommendations reflected in Leaving Care Plan  ENA recommendations reflected in IEP
<b>Individual Education Plan (IEP)</b>	Describes the adjustments, goals and strategies to meet a student’s individual educational needs so they can reach their full potential.  Students in statutory Out-of-Home Care  Koorie students  Program for Students with Disabilities  Students in youth justice  Students with a re-engagement program contract	<b>DET</b>  Developed by Teachers and students  Designated Teachers have oversight	IEP goals reflected in Leaving Care Plan, ENA and CAP



<p><b>Cultural Plan</b>  Koorie students</p>	<p>A cultural plan is part of a holistic approach to planning for children and young people in OOHC.</p> <p>To support students to maintain and strengthen their Aboriginal identity and encourage their connection to their Aboriginal culture and community.</p> <p><i>Please note schools may only receive the educational section of this plan</i></p>	<p><b>DFFH</b></p> <p>Developed by Senior Advisor – Aboriginal Cultural Planning (Local ACCO)</p> <p>DFFH have oversight</p>	<p>Cultural Plan goals and recommendations reflected in all planning documents</p>
<p><b>Leaving Care Plan</b>  From age 15 years</p>	<p>Housing – financial assistance and support for accommodation</p> <p>Education – assistance in finding further education and training</p> <p>Employment – assistance in finding employment.</p> <p>Counselling and other services.</p>	<p><b>DFFH</b></p>	<p>Leaving Care Plan goals reflected in CAP</p>
<p><b>Better Futures Support Plan</b>  From age 15.9 years</p>	<p>Outlines goals and aspirations as identified by the young person for</p> <p>Housing &amp; Living Skills</p> <p>Education, Employment</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellbeing</p> <p>Connections</p>	<p><b>Better Futures Provider</b></p>	<p>Support Plan goals reflected in Leaving Care Plan and CAP</p>

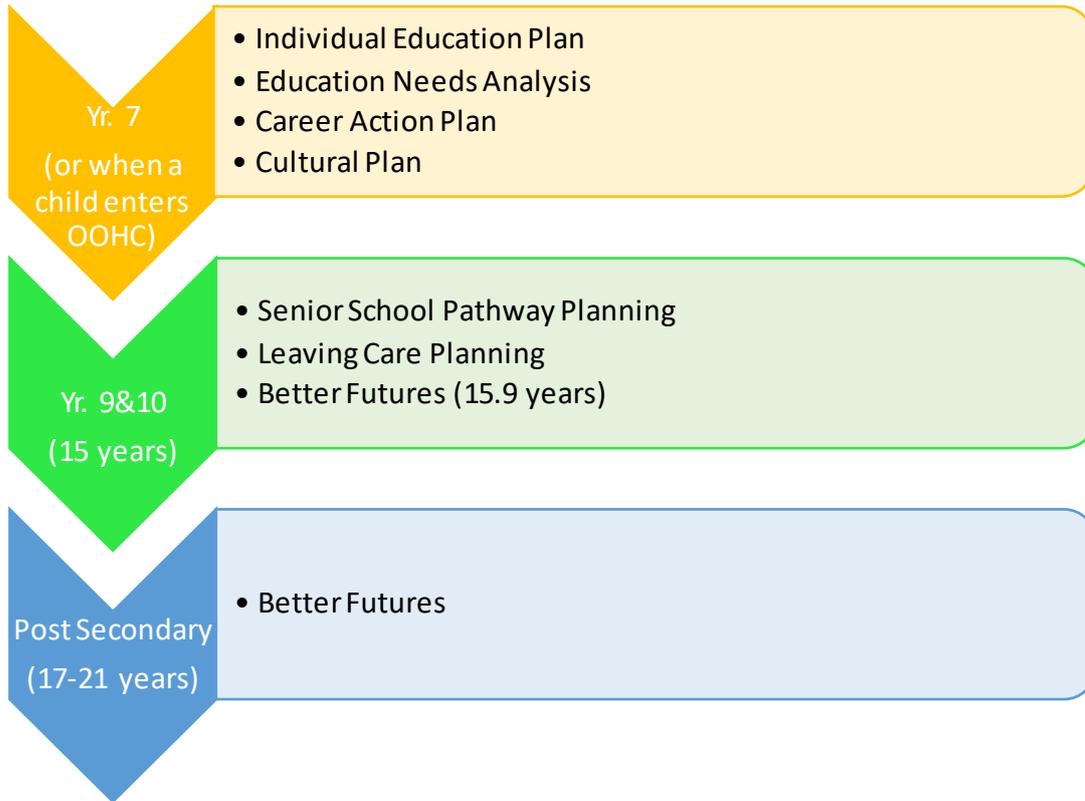


## Planning Checklist

Checklist	Completed	Not Completed
<b>Career Action Plan (CAP)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Education Needs Analysis (ENA)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Individual Education Plan (IEP)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Cultural Plan</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Leaving Care Plan</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Better Futures Support Plan</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Leaving School and Care Continuum





## Plan templates



## Resources

### Out-of-Home Care Supports

[Supporting Students in Out-of-Home Care : Policy | education.vic.gov.au](https://education.vic.gov.au)

### Child Protection Manual

<https://www.cpmanual.vic.gov.au/>

### Better Futures Providers

<https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/leaving-care>

### Raising Expectations

[Raising Expectations: getting more care leavers to TAFE and uni.](#)

### Looking After Children (LAC)

[Looking After Children | Child Protection Manual \(cpmanual.vic.gov.au\)](#)



## Practice example

A family has recently enrolled at South Eastern Secondary College. Siblings Lee (Year 10) and Jordan (Year 7). The Designated Teacher has been informed by their principal that the siblings are residing in Out-of-Home Care (home-based care) they are on a Family Reunification Order (FRO).

The Designated Teacher organises a Student Support Group meeting and invites Lee and Jordan, their grandparents, the Child Protection Practitioner and contracted community service organisation case manager. The Designated Teacher also invites the Career Practitioner to attend as well as the Wellbeing Coordinator and Year Level Coordinators.

The Designated Teacher and Career Practitioner contact the Designated Teacher at the previous school and request copies of the students' Individual Education Plans (IEP), Education Needs Analysis' (ENA), Career Action Plans (CAP) and previous school reports.

The Year 7 Level Coordinator reports Jordan is not attending school regularly. The Designated Teacher invites LOOKOUT to the Student Support Group meeting for engagement and career education supports.

The Career Practitioner from the previous school provided information that Lee completed the Morrisby diagnostic report and participated in an online career interview, due to COVID.

The Designated Teacher is experiencing some difficulties obtaining the documentation required from Lee and Jordan's previous school. They contact the Senior Transitions Officer in the DET Area office for assistance. The Senior Transitions officer also provides support and information about Navigator.

The Designated Teacher develops an agenda for the SSG with the identified purpose of engagement and support for Lee and Jordan at their new school. The first part of the SSG will be hearing from Lee and Jordan. The Learning Mentors from the previous school will provide support for Lee and Jordan. This will be followed by a professionals meeting, so as not to overwhelm the students.

During the SSG Lee and Jordan talk about their strengths and interests and supports that help them learn. The group review the current plans in place for the siblings. Lee expresses an interest in Art. The group agree to reflect this interest in Lee's CAP, IEP and Leaving Care Plan. The Better Futures worker indicates their program fosters community connections and will follow up community art opportunities for work experience or industry immersion. The group agree to source a work experience or immersion through LOOKOUT and/or the Local Learning and Employment Network.

Jordan expresses a love of PE. He requests the PE teacher as his new Learning Mentor. As part of Jordan's engagement plan, a check in with the PE teacher each morning is scheduled, this occurs while Jordan and the PE teacher set up for the daily lessons. It is noted Jordan does not yet have a Career Action Plan; the Career Practitioner agrees to support Jordan to complete this, with a focus on sports, with assistance from his Learning Mentor.

As Lee is 16 years old, the Child Protection Practitioner and Case Manager invite Lee's Better Futures worker to the Student Support Group meeting. Child Protection provide information on Lee's Transition and Leaving Care Plan – Looking after Children Model under the seven domains (including education) and Leaving Care Plan. The Better Futures worker indicates they will provide a consultative role, which includes the ability to support Lee and Jordan's educational goals with flexible funding to assist with related



purchases (fees, schoolbooks, community activities etc), until Lee is approaching 17 years of age when they will take on a more active role. The Child Protection Practitioner will review Lee's leaving care progress and planning at the area specific Leaving Care procedures.

A review of existing plans takes place with Lee, Jordan and the SSG. Lee and Jordan identify new IEP goals and CAP goals. Information from the ENA provides the group with an overview of the children's learning needs and agree to incorporate the recommendations listed to support learning and engagement. Child Protection and Better Futures agree to incorporate IEP and CAP goals in the leaving care plans.