



Office of the  
Children's Guardian



Office of the  
Children's Guardian

Report on the leaving care  
monitoring program  
2020-21

# Executive summary

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In 2020-21, the Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) reviewed leaving care practices in relation to 635 young people who turned 18 between 23 March 2020 and 31 December 2020, in accordance with the Children's Guardian's monitoring functions in relation to designated agencies<sup>1</sup>. The review included a brief review of ChildStory records for every young person leaving care between 23 March 2020 and 31 December 2020 as well as an in-depth review of 169 young people's leaving care records.

The purpose of the review was to ensure that leaving care casework with young people continued despite the challenges posed by COVID-19, given the particular vulnerabilities of this group of young people. The OCG has provided feedback to agencies regarding the circumstances of individual young people throughout the monitoring program and the OCG will continue to provide feedback to individual agencies regarding their leaving care practices and areas for improvement. This report summarises the OCG's observations of practice and sector-wide themes emerging from the review.

While the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on young people leaving care cannot yet be fully known, the pandemic has had a worldwide impact on how people live, study and work. Strategies to manage the spread of the virus including self-isolation, social distancing, time-limited 'lock downs' and border closures have all had an impact on designated agencies' capacity to supervise OOHC placements and support children and young people and their carers.

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This review found that the OOHC sector has adapted swiftly to the challenges of a new operating environment and agencies have been innovative in their approaches to supporting children and young people. It found evidence that agencies have been proactive in providing practical assistance to young people and their households. There was also evidence of discussions with young people regarding their anxieties about leaving care during the pandemic, including finding accommodation and work, and maintaining contact with important people in their lives.

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The OCG observed a number of themes across the sector:

- most young people who left care between 23 March and 31 December 2020 had a leaving care plan, but the quality of these plans varied significantly
- most young people who had a leaving care plan participated in the development of their plans and were able to influence decisions impacting on their lives
- where young people were not engaged in planning for leaving care, plans were often generic and not informed by an assessment of the young person's independent living skills
- those who were in stable placements and had the support of at least one adult had more comprehensive plans
- agencies need to strengthen approaches to cultural planning to help young people to maintain connections with culture, particularly for Aboriginal young people

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<sup>1</sup> Section 128(e) of the *Children's Guardian Act 2019*.

- many leaving care plans were approved after the young person had turned 18 and leaving care casework must begin much earlier, and
- the support that young people receive after leaving care varies significantly across the sector.

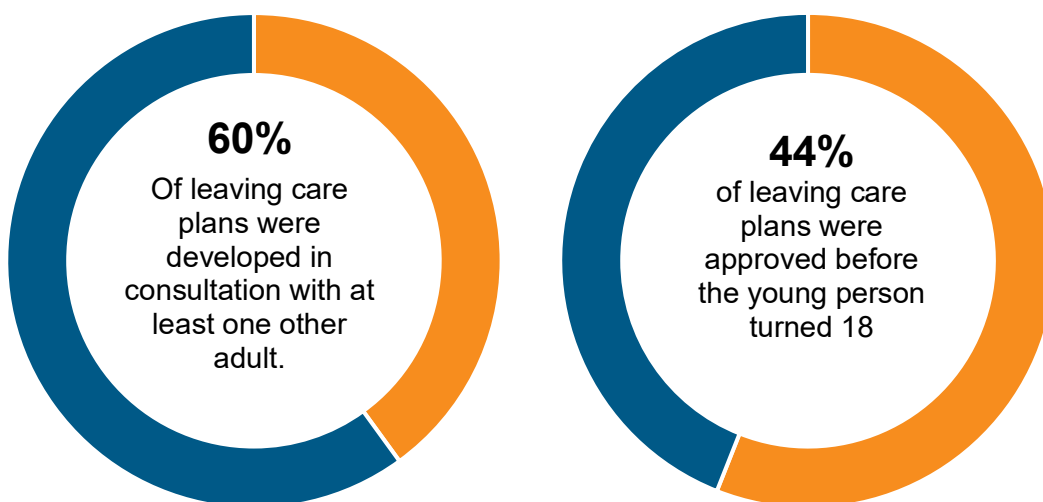
Agencies have been <b>adaptive, innovative and practical</b> during the pandemic.	The sector needs to strengthen <b>cultural planning</b> for young people leaving care.	Leaving care planning needs to start with young people <b>earlier</b> .
Clarity about <b>after care</b> is needed for the sector.	Themes emerging from this review will inform the review of <b>the Permanent Care Standards</b> .	<b>Interested adults</b> should be engaged in the planning process to improve quality of plans.

## Key statistics and findings

Of the 635 young people reviewed:

<p><b>245</b> young people were placed with DCJ and <b>390</b> young people placed with non-government agencies.</p>	<p><b>56</b> young people had records indicating that they had a disability and of these, <b>36</b> had an NDIS plan.</p>	<p><b>58%</b> of young people were living in home-based care.</p>
<p><b>13</b> young people were a parent / pregnant. <b>10</b> had plans that addressed parenting support needs.</p>	<p><b>10</b> were young people detained in a youth justice facility at the time of the review.</p>	<p><b>Over a third</b> of young people continued to receive some casework support after turning 18.</p>

Of the 169 young people in the in-depth review:



## Background

'Leaving care' refers to casework to assist children and young people to develop the independent living skills they will need to rely on as they transition to young adulthood. It also involves ensuring that young people have financial support and appropriate accommodation when they leave care and that arrangements have been made to ensure that young people are linked in with appropriate health, education and social support services.<sup>2</sup> Planning for leaving care is an iterative process and leaving care plans should be reviewed regularly, as the young person's needs and wishes change.

Regardless of the young person's circumstances, there are mandatory, minimum requirements that all agencies must meet to ensure that young people are adequately supported to transition to independence. Children and young people aged 15-25 years are entitled to assistance to support them to transition from care.<sup>3</sup> This includes financial assistance, legal assistance, accommodation and other practical supports to meet their day-to-day needs. Every young person must have a leaving care plan setting out the assistance and support to be provided to them, once they leave care<sup>4</sup>.

Standard 12 of the Permanent Care Standards sets out the minimum leaving care practice requirements for all accredited OOHC providers<sup>5</sup>:

1. that young people are encouraged and assisted to develop independent living skills
2. strategies for young people to manage everyday issues in their lives are included in leaving care plans
3. young people have leaving care plans which include support for accessing accommodation and financial assistance
4. upon leaving care, young people are provided with their original identity documents and life story material and are provided with information on how to access their files, if they wish
5. upon leaving care, young people are provided with information about their entitlements to continued support and assistance, and how to access these services, and
6. after they have left care, young people are provided with additional support or are referred to a relevant service, where their circumstances require it.

The Permanent Care Standards require agencies to support children and young people, their carers, family members and significant people in their lives to participate in important decision-making and this includes planning for leaving care.

Leaving care plans are broadly comprised of two elements: an after-care plan setting out the practical supports and services to be provided to the young person on leaving care and a financial plan, which is approved by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). The financial plan is informed by the known and anticipated needs of the young person to 25 years of age.

Alongside the development of a leaving care plan, caseworkers should be working with the young

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<sup>2</sup> NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) (September 2019). *Why is a leaving care plan important?*: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/leaving-care-planning/why-is-a-plan-important>

<sup>3</sup> Section 165(1) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*

<sup>4</sup> Section 166(1) of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*

<sup>5</sup> OCG (November 2015). *NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care*, p. 17: [https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/449/ChildSafeStandards\\_PermanentCare.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y](https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/449/ChildSafeStandards_PermanentCare.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y)

person to gradually build their independent living skills and caseworkers should start engaging young people in these discussions from the age of 15.<sup>6</sup>

Leaving care planning is a challenging area of practice. It requires caseworkers to have difficult conversations with young people about their future beyond care, while also supporting young people to navigate the challenges experienced by all adolescents. These conversations are made more difficult where the young person has experienced multiple placement changes and has not had opportunities to develop trusting relationships with a caseworker or a care provider.<sup>7</sup>

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Leaving care casework is more than developing a plan and ensuring that referrals to other services have been made. Good leaving care casework also involves working with the young person to develop, test and practice critical independent living skills, particularly budgeting and financial management skills, obtaining employment and finding appropriate accommodation.<sup>8</sup>

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## Review methodology

OCG assessors in the accreditation and monitoring team reviewed young people's leaving care records between June 2020 and April 2021. Young people's records were reviewed via remote access to designated agencies' record-keeping systems, as well as during planned onsite assessments of some designated agencies.

The review considered the leaving care records of 635 young people, who turned 18 between 23 March 2020 and 31 December 2020. The sample included 245 young people placed with DCJ and 390 young people placed with non-government agencies.

A high-level review of records contained on ChildStory was undertaken for each young person and information was gathered regarding:

- the young person's cultural background and gender
- whether the young person has a disability
- whether the young person has a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) plan
- whether the young person is a parent or pregnant
- placement type at the time of leaving care
- whether the young person had a final, approved leaving care and financial plan, and
- any concerns regarding the young person's safety or welfare that required further follow-up.

The OCG initially intended to review each young person's ChildStory records to gather information from across the sector regarding compliance with the requirement to prepare leaving care plans for

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<sup>6</sup> DCJ (March 2021). *Moving forward with leaving care 'future' planning*: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=629790>.

<sup>7</sup> McDowall, J.J (2020). *Transitioning to adulthood from out-of-home care: independence or interdependence*. CREATE Foundation, p.57: <https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> McDowall, J.J (2018). *Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and Young people's views after five years of National Standards*. Sydney: CREATE Foundation, p23: <https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CREATE-OOHC-In-Care-2018-Report.pdf>

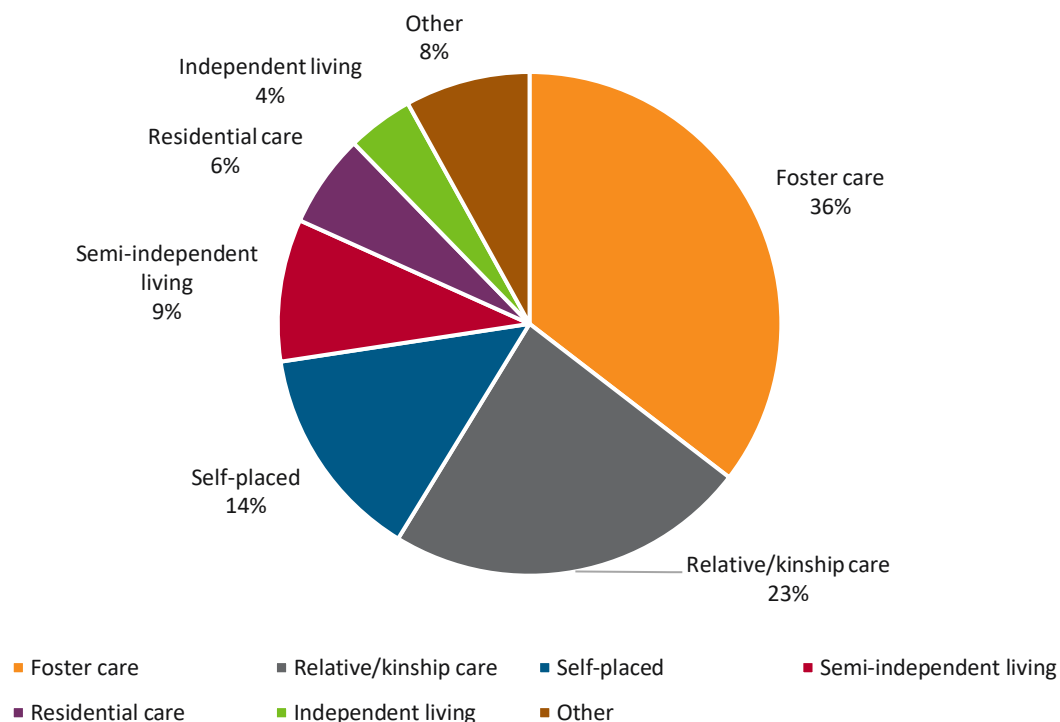
every young person leaving care. However, the review found that there is not a consistent process across the sector for non-government agencies to submit young people’s leaving care financial plans, for DCJ approval. Leaving care plans prepared by non-government agencies are not always recorded on ChildStory before they have left care and it was not always possible, based on a review of ChildStory records alone, to ascertain whether the leaving care financial plans for young people placed with non-government agencies were approved by DCJ prior to the young person leaving care.

The initial review provided high-level information about the circumstances of the 635 young people leaving care during 2020 and a sample of 169 young people from across the sector was selected for a further in-depth review. Concerns regarding individual circumstances arising from the initial review were referred to the relevant agency for follow-up. This included circumstances where young people did not appear to be living in suitable accommodation or where there was no evidence that leaving care planning was occurring.

The in-depth review focused on the quality of leaving care plans, including whether the plans reflected the young person’s particular needs, the participation of young people and their families in the development of the plan and casework to support young people to develop independent living skills.

## Snapshot of young people reviewed

### Placement type at time of eighteenth birthday



Most young people (58%) were living in home-based care at the time of the review, with 225 young people in foster care and 148 in relative/kinship care. There were 118 young people living in a range of supported, non-home-based care arrangements including residential care, intensive therapeutic care arrangements, special care and semi-independent living.

Figure 1: placement type at time of review

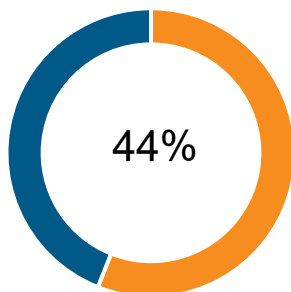
Placement type	Number of young people
Foster care	225
Relative/kinship care	148
Self-placed	88
Supported independent living	58
Residential care/Intensive therapeutic care	52
Independent living	27
Youth justice facility	10
Alternative care arrangement	9
Unclear from young person's records	7
Therapeutic supported independent living	4
Special care	4
Restoration to family in progress	3

There were 10 young people detained in a youth justice facility at the time of the review and nine young people in alternative care arrangements.<sup>9</sup>

## Key observations from the in-depth reviews

The following observations are drawn from the in-depth review of leaving care records of 169 young people, across DCJ and non-government agencies. Records contained on ChildStory as well as records prepared by non-government agencies were considered in this review.

Just over three-quarters of the young people reviewed had a final, approved leaving care plan.

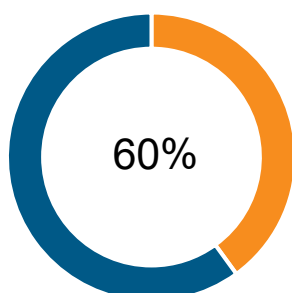
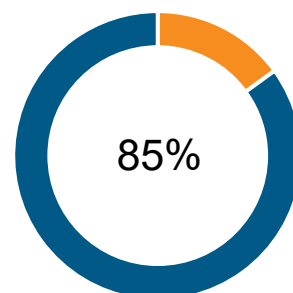


**Less than half** of these plans (44%) were approved prior to the young person's eighteenth birthday. Where there was no final, approved plan on the young person's records, assessors frequently noted draft or incomplete plans where active casework was still occurring. In a very small number of cases there was no evidence of any leaving care planning work occurring at the time of the review.

<sup>9</sup> Alternative care arrangements refer to arrangements where a young person is placed in short-term emergency accommodation when a suitable foster care, relative/kinship care or residential care placement is not available.



**Most young people** (85%) who had a final, approved leaving care plan were actively involved in developing the plan. Where young people were not involved in case planning, this was most commonly because the young person did not wish to participate.



**Over 60%** of final, approved leaving care plans were developed in consultation with at least one other adult (including carers, family members, friends or professionals representing health, education, juvenile justice or the NDIS). These leaving care plans tended to be more comprehensive and contained specific tasks relevant to the young person's individual circumstances.

- 13 young people were either a parent or pregnant and 10 of these young people had leaving care plans that specifically addressed parenting support needs.
- 26 young people were involved in Youth Justice and 5 were incarcerated at the time of the review. Youth Justice workers were involved in the preparation of leaving care plans for 9 young people.
- 127 young people had access to appropriate accommodation upon leaving care<sup>10</sup>
- 56 young people had records indicating that they had a disability and of the 43 young people who appeared to meet NDIS eligibility criteria, 36 had an NDIS plan.
- NDIS workers were involved in developing leaving care plans for 25 young people, either by attending planning meetings or providing comments and feedback on leaving care plans.
- An audit of eligibility for Victims of Crime compensation was undertaken for 135 young people
- 37 young people were receiving some form of legal assistance, including help:
  - complying with Apprehended Violence Orders
  - completing community orders
  - with Children's Court proceedings regarding the young person's own child, and
  - regarding applications for guardianship or adoption.

<sup>10</sup> Accommodation was considered to be appropriate where there was evidence of discussions between caseworkers, the young person and the people with whom the young person was planning to reside, about the safety of the living arrangement, where there was evidence of strategies to support the living arrangement and where there did not appear to be an immediate risk of homelessness.

# Themes emerging from the in-depth reviews

## Leaving care casework and COVID-19

Despite the challenges posed by COVID-19 most young people (80%) were in regular contact with their caseworker and were receiving proactive casework throughout 2020. This included:

- regular home visits (either in person or via video conferencing)
- visits to young people at school or at work
- formal meetings to finalise leaving care plans
- referrals to relevant services
- support to attend family contact, and
- contact via telephone and text messages.

Almost all young people discussed practical issues associated with COVID-19 with their caseworkers, including arranging grocery deliveries where households were in isolation, providing households with advice regarding social distancing, updating households on government health advice and arranging laptops for young people to engage in online learning.

In some cases (37%), there was evidence of discussions between young people and their caseworkers about the impact of COVID-19 on their mental health and sense of wellbeing. Young people reported anxieties about whether to remain in their placements (where this was possible) or whether to move into more independent living arrangements, and what this would mean if the pandemic continues long into the future. Some young people reported feeling nervous about returning to school following a period of online learning at home and others expressed feelings of loneliness and isolation when unable to engage in social and recreational activities. Where young people were already engaged with counsellors or mental health professionals there were efforts to support them to continue to attend appointments, either in person or via video conferencing.

This review found that most young people who had a final, approved leaving care plan were actively involved in developing the plan. This review also found evidence of casework to help young people to develop and test their independent living skills. Of the 169 young people considered in the in-depth review, 77% appeared to be talking to their caseworkers about their independent living skills, their degree of confidence in these skills and finding opportunities to practice these skills.

## Addressing cultural needs of Aboriginal young people in leaving care plans

While almost all leaving care plans (95%) addressed young people's health, educational, social and emotional and legal needs as well as practical day-to-day living needs, the cultural support component of leaving care plans tended to be generic and did not always have detail about how young people were to be supported to maintain connections with culture.

Of the 169 young people in the in-depth review, 40% were Aboriginal, but only 23% of Aboriginal young people had leaving care plans developed with family participation.

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Leaving care plans that were developed in consultation with young people's family tended to be more comprehensive, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities around meeting young people's cultural needs.

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In October 2020 the OCG commenced a review of the Permanent Care Standards, speaking with Aboriginal OOHC providers about the practices most critical to promoting the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC. Aboriginal workers described wellbeing as being culturally strong and that it is limiting to think about culture as just one part of a case plan or leaving care plan. Agencies explained that wellbeing cannot be separated from an understanding and experience of culture. A failure to understand this means that cultural support and supporting family connections becomes ‘another box to tick’ and seen as less important than meeting health and educational needs.<sup>11</sup>

Agencies also described the importance of proactively engaging young people’s families to support them to transition out of care. Aboriginal young people leaving care cannot have the depth of cultural experience or support they need, if their families are not meaningfully involved in their lives.<sup>12</sup> This review found that family participation did appear to result in more comprehensive, meaningful plans. However, family participation in leaving care planning is an area requiring significant improvement across the sector.

## Characteristics of good leaving care practice

### Consulting the young person’s support network

While most young people were participating in leaving care planning, the participation of family, other professionals or people of significance to the young person was less common.

Just under 60% of leaving care plans were developed in consultation with at least one other interested and engaged adult including carers, family members, other professionals, mentors or a support person or advocate. These plans tended to have detailed tasks specific to the young person’s circumstances and more clearly defined roles and responsibilities. Engaging people who know the young person well is critical to developing meaningful leaving care plans. This is particularly important where a young person is struggling to engage with leaving care planning, or where the young person has experienced multiple changes in caseworkers or placements.

### Engaging early and reviewing progress

This review identified many examples of sensitive, thoughtful work with young people leaving care. Good leaving care practice was occurring where caseworkers started working with young people on their independent living skills early and the development of plans was not rushed. There were many examples of caseworkers taking an iterative approach to leaving care planning, regularly reviewing and updating plans as the young person’s needs and wishes changed.

## Resources to support leaving care casework and aftercare support

There is guidance and casework resources available on the DCJ website to assist with leaving care planning, including:

- *Ministerial guidelines for the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care*<sup>13</sup>
- *Leaving care during COVID-19 factsheet*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> OCG (April 2021). *Review of the NSW Child Safe Standards for Permanent Care*, p. 7:

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/statutory-out-of-home-care-and-adoption/standards-review-2020>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> DCJ (February 2021). *Guidelines for the provision of assistance after leaving out-of-home care*:

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=322258>

<sup>14</sup> DCJ (April 2020). *Fact Sheet: Supporting young people turning 18 during the COVID-19 pandemic*:

[https://www.coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/779028/young-people-leaving-care-planning-process.pdf](https://www.coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/779028/young-people-leaving-care-planning-process.pdf)

- *Leaving care checklist*, detailing the aftercare assistance available to young people<sup>15</sup>
- Guidance notes regarding the key elements of a leaving care plan<sup>16</sup>
- *Casework practitioner's guide to leaving and aftercare*<sup>17</sup>
- Video series on engaging with young people and their families<sup>18</sup>
- *Independent Living Skills Checklist*<sup>19</sup>
- *Leading the way: a guide for carers*<sup>20</sup>
- *Living agreement discussion guide for caseworkers*, to assist discussions with carers and young people when completing the Living Arrangements Agreement<sup>21</sup>
- *Reconnection Planning Guiding Principles* guidance note<sup>22</sup>
- *Work and Development Order factsheet*, for young people in care with unpaid fines.<sup>23</sup>

There are also resources for young people including:

- Care Leaver's Charter of Rights<sup>24</sup>
- *Your next step* booklet for young people leaving care<sup>25</sup>
- The Resolve app for young people leaving care<sup>26</sup>
- Links to the CREATE Foundation resources for young people leaving care<sup>27</sup>
- Links to the You website with resources for young people leaving care.<sup>28</sup>

The review found that in addition to the resources available on the DCJ website, many designated agencies also have their own casework materials to support leaving care planning. Despite the range of checklists, guidance notes and factsheets available to caseworkers, this review found

<sup>15</sup> DCJ (2020). *COVID-19: application form and checklist for non-government agencies*: [https://www.coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/779026/Application-form-and-checklist-Assistance-available-to-Young-People-through-the-leaving-care-process.pdf](https://www.coronavirus.dcj.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/779026/Application-form-and-checklist-Assistance-available-to-Young-People-through-the-leaving-care-process.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> DCJ (September 2019). *Key elements of a leaving care plan*: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/leaving-care-planning/key-elements>

<sup>17</sup> DCJ (May 2021). *Casework practitioner's guide to leaving care and aftercare*: [https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/811101/Casework-Practitioners-guide-to-leaving-and-aftercare.pdf](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/811101/Casework-Practitioners-guide-to-leaving-and-aftercare.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> DCJ (October 2020). *Leaving and aftercare videos*: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/leaving-care-planning/resources-for-caseworkers/leaving-and-aftercare-videos>

<sup>19</sup> DCJ (January 2019). *Independent living skills: a checklist for young people in care*: [https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/319367/Independent-Living-Skills-A-checklist-for-young-people-in-care.pdf](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/319367/Independent-Living-Skills-A-checklist-for-young-people-in-care.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> DCJ (March 2018). *Leading the way: preparing young people for leaving care*: [https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/785560/leading\\_the\\_way\\_a\\_guide\\_for\\_carers...pdf](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/785560/leading_the_way_a_guide_for_carers...pdf)

<sup>21</sup> DCJ (May 2020). *Discussion guide for living care arrangement agreement*: [https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/769905/Discussion-Guide-2020.pdf](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/769905/Discussion-Guide-2020.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> DCJ (September 2018). *Reconnection planning guiding principles*: [https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/630291/Reconnection-Planning-Guiding-Principles-September-2018.pdf](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/630291/Reconnection-Planning-Guiding-Principles-September-2018.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> DCJ (June 2020). *Work and development orders*: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/providers/children-families/leaving-care-planning/key-elements/chapters/legal-matters/work-and-development-orders>

<sup>24</sup> DCJ (December 2019). *Carer Leavers' Charter of Rights*: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/out-of-home-care/children-in-oohc/rights-in-care/chapters/care-leavers-charter-of-rights>

<sup>25</sup> DCJ (2020). *Your next step: preparing young people for leaving care*: [https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/319362/Your-Next-Step.pdf](https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/319362/Your-Next-Step.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> DCJ (October 2019). *Resolve app for young people leaving care*: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/about/reforms/children-families/resolve-app>

<sup>27</sup> CREATE Foundation (June 2020). *Go Your Own Way: a guide to transitioning to independence*: [https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CRE4244\\_GYOW-Handbook-June2020\\_web.pdf](https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CRE4244_GYOW-Handbook-June2020_web.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> <https://you.childstory.nsw.gov.au/home>

critical gaps in some young people's care records about the information and assistance provided to young people regarding aftercare supports.

In 60% of cases, caseworkers had specifically documented their discussions with young people about aftercare support services and information about how to access services after leaving care. Just over half of young people's care records indicated that the caseworker had discussed the young person's right to access their own records.

Less than half of the young people's care records specifically noted that the young person had been assisted to check their eligibility for the Transition to Independent Living Allowance. While leaving care plans routinely included details of financial support to be provided by DCJ, only 70% of young people's leaving care records indicated that the young person had also been assisted to check their eligibility and apply for (where relevant), a range of other Commonwealth financial assistance through Centrelink.

While some of these gaps may indicate a lack of documentation of discussions with young people, it is not clear, in the absence of any records, what information has been provided to the young person and how the young person has been assisted to understand the information.

### **After care support**

Just over one third of young people continued to receive some casework support after turning 18. This ranged from:

- regular home visits (most commonly where the young person continued to live in home-based care with other children and young people in OOHC)
- follow-up referrals to aftercare services, and
- practical assistance with accessing Centrelink payments and securing accommodation.

Much of this casework was to follow up on leaving care tasks that had not been completed before the young person turned 18.

Where there was contact between the young person and the agency post-care this was usually initiated by the young person requesting financial or housing assistance. Responses to young people requesting assistance ranged from active casework support through to advising the young person to consult their leaving care plan about support services they may wish to access.

All young people who were a parent or pregnant were receiving ongoing casework after turning 18. Most young people who were engaged in Youth Justice - and all young people who were incarcerated at the time of their eighteenth birthday - were receiving some form of aftercare support at the time of the review.

It appears from this review is that there is a good understanding across the sector regarding agencies' obligations to prepare leaving care plans and to work with young people to develop their independent living skills. However, there is inconsistency regarding the implementation of leaving care plans once a young person has turned 18 and inconsistent approaches to supporting young people who have left care.

## Next steps

The OCG will continue to provide feedback to agencies following the in-depth reviews, where there are areas for improvement.

The OCG is conducting a review of the Permanent Care Standards in the latter half of 2021. The review of the Permanent Care Standards will consider:

- findings from consultations with Aboriginal OOHC providers and Aboriginal workers in non-Aboriginal agencies (foot note of the report)
- findings of the *Independent Review of Aboriginal Children and Young People in NSW Out of-Home Care* (the Family is Culture report) conducted by Professor Megan Davis
- the OCG response to the Family is Culture report
- the 10 Child Safe Standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and
- this report into the Leaving care monitoring program 2020-21.

This review has identified a need for a sector-wide discussion about the supports young people should expect to receive after they have left care, as well as opportunities to strengthen cultural planning for young people leaving care in collaboration with their families and communities.

The OCG will explore with the peak bodies, the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) and the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec), opportunities to establish a sector advisory group to consider the themes raised in this report and to provide advice to the OCG on the review of the Permanent Care Standards.