

Stability Post Care Fact Sheet

The Department for Child Protection (DCP) has two post care programs supporting young people who are remaining in their family-based placement from the age of 18 years. These programs are the Stability in Family Based Care (SFBC) Program and the Over 18 Education Initiative (O18EI). When a young person in care turns 18, the court order expires. This might mean the young person no longer wants to live in their current family-based care placement - but a lot of the time they do want to stay. Each program is based on the carer's and young person's commitment to each other.

Key eligibility criteria for the programs

Before applying for either of the post care programs there are certain eligibility requirements including:

- the young person was under one of the following arrangements to the age of 18 years:
 - Guardianship/Long Term Guardianship (including Specified Person) order
 - Family Care Meeting Agreement
 - other long term formal agreement where the Chief Executive assumed some form of legal responsibility.
- the carer agrees for the young person to continue living in their home on a full time basis (a minimum of 4 nights a week) beyond the young person's 18th birthday
- it continues to be in the young person's best interests to remain in the family home
- the carer, the young person and required signatories sign an application form for the SFBC/O18EI program.

Be sure to discuss these criteria with your Stability Post Care (SPC) team member if you have any questions.

The Stability in Family-Based Care Program

The SFBC program helps support young people to achieve their potential with the opportunity to remain in their family-based care placement until they turn 21 years of age.

The program will provide approved primary family-based carers who continue to care for a young person after their Youth Court order or long term formal agreement expires on the young person's 18th birthday with extended carer payments until the young person turns 21 years of age.

Specific eligibility for the SFBC program

The eligibility requirements for the SFBC program include the following:

- the young person turned 18 on or after 1 July 2018 and wants to continue to live in the carer's home on a full time basis (4 nights a week) beyond the young person's 18th birthday
- the young person is not earning an income that exceeds the carer payment
- there are no additional carer payments being received (other than the Centrelink carer payment)

The Over 18 Education Initiative

The O18EI provides ongoing support to young people who choose to remain in their family-based care placement to 25 years of age with their education and employment opportunities.

The initiative will provide approved family-based carers with extended carer payments, inclusive of the education grant, up to the young person turning 25 years of age, if they continue to engage in full-time secondary or tertiary education (including Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Flexible Learning Options (FLO)) or are undertaking the full time components of an apprenticeship.

Specific eligibility for the Over 18 Education Initiative

The eligibility requirements for the Over 18 Education Initiative include the following:

- the young person is participating in secondary or tertiary study. Further education criteria includes that the young person:
 - remains enrolled and is participating in full time secondary or tertiary education (including VET and FLO)
 - is undertaking the full-time components of an apprenticeship
 - is enrolled and participating in any post high school course on a full time basis
 - is in a study arrangement that meets the young person's maximum capacity to engage, being sensitive to their circumstances (such as developmental, intellectual, physical or mental health presentations) and on advice from the education provider and other relevant stakeholders, such as health professionals.
- if the young person was under a Long Term Guardianship (Specified Person) order, the young person is only eligible for the SFBC program even if participating in full-time education
- there are no income threshold restrictions applicable to the O18EI, including Centrelink benefits.

How much is the carer payment?

As an approved primary carer, you will continue to receive your fortnightly carer payment, indexed annually.

If participating in these programs, the carer won't be able to access respite care, incidental expenses, special needs loading, activity grants, remote access or other loadings.

If the young person is eligible for the O18EI, they are also eligible for the Education Grant.

For more information about carer payments, please refer to the [Carer Support Payments Handbook](#) located on the DCP website, speak to your DCP case worker or SPC team member.

How do the programs work?

Post care arrangements will be introduced as a part of transition from care planning. This usually starts when the young person turns 15 years of age.

Young people who are aged 17 ½ years can apply to the appropriate post care program. The carer and the young person will need to complete an [application form](#) which is downloadable from the DCP website.

Stability Post Care Program Plan

It is important that the Annual Stability Post Care Program Plan is regularly reviewed to ensure the current circumstances of the carer and the young person are accurately reflected. To be eligible for the programs, the carer and the young person will need to contribute to, participate in and sign a Stability Post Care Program Plan annually. This includes completing an agreement regarding continued eligibility for the program.

A Stability Post Care Program Plan aims to support the young person to develop a range of life and social skills that will prepare them for future independence as required. This includes things like:

- finance and budgeting
- cooking
- managing a home
- applying for jobs
- continuing education

SPC Program Liaison

Once the young person has turned 18, the DCP office ceases to undertake regular case management responsibilities for the young person. As part of the SPC program, there is still liaison with the department – but it is less intensive than guardianship case management and designed to support the young person in their family environment. Young people will be building their skills to manage their own independence and we want them to have the safety net of supportive family relationships to continue their care plan.

The SPC team member will contact the carer and the young person quarterly to review their eligibility and the SPC Program Plan. If relevant, the DCP worker will provide referral information and support to access other services.

If the young person needs more intensive case management within this period, they will be referred to Post Care Services and the SPC team member will take a secondary support role.

When will the programs end?

The SFBC or O18EI arrangement will end when the young person stops meeting the eligibility criteria or they reach the age limit of eligibility.

When the SFBC or O18EI arrangement ends, the SPC Program Plan will be reviewed and plans made to ensure the young person can move into suitable accommodation and access suitable services.

If for whatever reason either party no longer wants to continue with the SFBC or O18EI arrangement, they may cease the program at any time by giving notice to the SPC team member.

Can the young person move between the two post care programs?

Yes. If the circumstances of the young person changes, discuss this with the SPC team member who will check eligibility and guide the carer and the young person to the most appropriate program.

Responsibilities

What are my responsibilities as a carer?

Part of the carer's responsibility is to ensure that they work with the young person and SPC team member to support and maintain stability for the young person in their care, preparing them for future independence. As part of the program's eligibility requirements, on an annual basis the carer will need to complete a PC Program Plan and an Annual Agreement.

It is important that the carer immediately informs DCP if the young person:

- is no longer residing with the carer on a full time basis
- returns to residing with the carer on a full time basis after any time away
- reaches the income threshold (applicable to those in the SFBC program)
- is no longer participating in further education (O18EI only).

What are my responsibilities as a young person?

Part of the young person's responsibilities within either of these programs is that they contribute and participate in an annual SPC Program Plan, including the completion of the annual agreement form. It is also important that the young person maintains contact with their SPC team member especially if circumstances change. For example if the young person:

- no longer lives with their carer on a full-time basis
- returns to living with their carer on a full-time basis after any time away
- reaches the income threshold (applicable to those in the SFBC program)
- are no longer participating in further education (O18EI only).

The young person will have access to some form of income (Centrelink or paid employment), there is also an expectation that financially, the young person will contribute to their own:

- clothing
- social life
- toiletries
- costs related to transport education, training and employment.

What if I have a change of circumstances?

Any change in circumstance that affects the carer's or young person's eligibility must be communicated to the department within 7-14 days. If the change is temporary, the carer or young person still needs to advise the department. Changes to a young person's circumstances may affect any payments received. Information about overpayment and overpayment recovery is provided in the [Carer Supports Payment Handbook](#).

What if either party (the young person or the carer) no longer wants to continue with the program?

In instances where a SFBC or O18EI arrangement is not suitable for the carer, alternative arrangements should be identified to make sure the young person is supported in accordance with their transition from care. If a young person no longer wants to continue with the program please speak with the caseworker or SPC team member