



Stability in Family-Based Care and Over 18 Education Initiative Procedure

1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide detail for the Department for Child Protection (DCP) case work staff about the Stability in Family-Based Care (SFBC) Program and the Over 18 Education Initiative (O18EI), including eligibility, roles and responsibilities, referral and monitoring processes.

The purpose of the program/initiative is to support young people leaving care at the age of 18 years to achieve continuity of care arrangements and stability as well as participate in secondary or tertiary education.

This procedure will have regards for acknowledging the over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and young people in the child protection and out of home care systems. Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's connection to their family, culture, community and Country is critical to nurture their wellbeing, spirituality and sense of identity. Ensuring stability of relationships with carers and continuity of care arrangements can support and enhance cultural safety and strength.

DCP must consider how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people will continue to be connected to their family, community, culture and Country whilst having continuity of care arrangements post 18 years of age. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people must feel a sense of belonging and connections to achieve optimal education and future employment success. Connecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education services and programs earlier provides opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to be supported culturally to achieve higher education outcomes in a stable and supported placement.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all DCP staff involved in the management of young people in family-based care.

3. Authority

3.1 Legislative context

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017](#)

3.2 Whole of Government requirements

Not applicable.

3.3 DCP requirements

- [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#)



3.4 Principles

When working with a young person who may be considered for either the SFBC Program or the O18EI, processes are underpinned by the following principles:

- the safety of children and young people is the paramount consideration
- young people are at the centre of decision making
- young people can transition to adulthood from the security and stability of an existing/established family-based home
- young people can achieve education, employment and training
- the program is based on the carer's and the young person's commitment to each other.

4. Procedure requirements

4.1 Program description and eligibility

Where it is in the young person's best interests to remain in the carer's home, carers will continue to be paid the basic subsidy (no additional loadings will be applicable). If involved in the O18EI, the carers in addition to the basic subsidy will also be paid the education grant. Refer to [Carer Support Payments Handbook](#) for further information.

The young person and their carer(s) can move between either post guardianship programs depending on their eligibility. The exception is those young people previously under a Long-term Guardianship (Specified Person) (LTGSP) order, who are only eligible for the Stability in Family-Based Care Program (refer to program eligibility below).

Where young people living in regional or remote communities spend time away from their primary carer for education or training purposes, the eligibility criteria and these circumstances will be taken into consideration and applied on a case-by-case basis to support the young person's placement and education. Please seek further guidance from the SFBC supervisor.

Further cultural consideration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and young people from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background who are in care, aged 18 years, who may spend time away from their primary carer, as per the eligibility criteria, should be flexible and consideration applied to their reconnecting with their family and culture. Connection to culture is a main component of success for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and acknowledged as an essential part of a young person's wellbeing. There must be regard to prioritise their cultural needs where appropriate. Seek further guidance from the SFBC supervisor if required.

4.1.1 Stability in Family-Based Care Program

The Stability in Family-Based Care (SFBC) Program helps young people leaving care to remain in their family-based care placement and provides carers with continued carer payments until the young person turns 21. This payment will be available until the young person moves out of the family home, receives wages that surpass the carer payment, enters full-time secondary or tertiary education or turns 21 – whichever is sooner.

If the young person is in education, the carer and young person may be eligible for the Over 18 Education Initiative (O18EI). Refer to O18EI eligibility criteria in 4.1.2.



Program eligibility criteria

For the young person to be eligible for the SFBC Program the following criteria must be met:

- the young person was under one of the following arrangements to the age of 18 years:
 - i. Guardianship/Long-term Guardianship (including Specified Person) order
 - ii. Family Care Meeting Agreement
 - iii. other long-term formal agreement for whom the Chief Executive assumed legal responsibility.
- the young person turned 18 years of age on or after 1 July 2018
- the young person wishes to and agrees to continue to reside in the primary approved carer's home on a full-time basis after they turn 18 years of age and the approved primary carer agrees for the young person to continue to reside with them in their home on a full-time basis after they turn 18 years of age
- the carer is not entitled to another payment for the care of the young person post-18 years (other than the Centrelink carer payment)
- the young person resides with the carer full-time (at least four nights per week)
- it is in the young person's best interests to remain in the family home.

4.1.2 Over 18 Education Initiative

The O18EI provides family-based carers extended carer payments for a young person until 25 years of age if they are engaged in full-time secondary or tertiary education (including Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Flexible Learning Option (FLO)) or are undertaking the full-time components of an apprenticeship. This payment will be available until the young person moves out of the family home, completes their qualification or turns 25 - whichever is sooner. Family based carers will also receive the education grant paid at the beginning of each term to assist with education costs. Refer to [Carer Support Payments Handbook](#) for further information regarding the education grant. There are no income threshold restrictions applicable to the O18EI, including Centrelink benefits.

Program eligibility criteria

For the young person to be eligible for the O18EI the following criteria must be met:

- the young person was under one of the following arrangements to the age of 18 years:
 - i. was previously under a Guardianship of the Minister order that has since ceased
 - ii. Family Care Meeting Agreement
 - iii. other long-term formal agreement for whom the Chief Executive assumed legal responsibility.
- the young person is participating in secondary or tertiary study and meets the follow criteria:
 - i. remains enrolled and participating in full-time secondary or tertiary education (including VET and FLO)
 - ii. is undertaking the full-time components of an apprenticeship
 - iii. enrolled and participating in any post high school course on a full-time basis
 - iv. enrolled in an Aboriginal Access Pathways to higher education for example: university entrance



- v. 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.
- the approved primary carer agrees for the young person to continue to reside with them in their home on a full-time basis after the young person turns 18 years of age
- the young person resides with the carer full-time (at least four nights per week)
- it is in the young person's best interests to remain in the family home.

4.1.3 Exclusion criteria

If the young person was under a LTGSP order, they are only eligible for the SFBC program even if participating in full-time education.

The carer is ineligible for the SFBC payment when the young person's income reaches or exceeds the amount equivalent to the carer subsidy. For example, the young person's combined working wage and Centrelink benefits exceed the carer payments.

If the carer is a HomeLink care provider, they are ineligible for the SFBC program and the O18EI program. The DCP Disability Support Team is available for case consultation and can be contacted at DCPDisabilityProgram@sa.gov.au

4.2 Select and refer a carer and young person to a post guardianship program

The following steps are for the DCP case worker to action:

- a. Discuss the SFBC program/O18EI eligibility and expectations with the carer as part of transition planning. The DCP case worker can direct the carer to the [Carer Support Payments](#) on the DCP website for additional information. Provide the carer with a copy of the [Stability Post Care Fact Sheet](#).
- b. If the carer agrees to continue to a post-18 year living arrangement, discuss the SFBC program/O18EI eligibility and expectations with the young person as part of transition planning.
- c. When the young person is 17 ½ years of age, provide the carer/young person the [Stability Post Care Application Form](#) which includes an agreement section. This form is to be signed by both parties.
- d. The agreement, as part of the application form, constitutes part of the application process regarding the participant's circumstances.

By signing the agreement, the carer and young person agree to inform DCP, within the stipulated timeframes, of any change in circumstances that may affect their eligibility. Any overpayments made as a result of not advising DCP of changes that may affect the carer payment and/or not complying with the requirements of the SFBC and O18EI arrangements, will be required to be repaid to DCP.

- e. Make a post guardianship program referral in C3MS, attaching the signed SFBC/O18EI application form.

For more information about how to make a referral, see [C3MS Guide – Referrals](#) Select 'Assessment' service type and 'Stability in Family Based Care' or 'Over 18 Education Initiative' as the requested service.



4.3 Confirm eligibility

The following steps are for the SFBC Supervisor:

- a. Receive the SFBC/O18EI application form from the DCP case worker via the C3MS referral, or directly from the carer/young person, and review the SFBC/O18EI application form against the program criteria.
- b. Once eligibility is confirmed, the SFBC Supervisor will add/create a SFBC/O18EI Service Provision entry in C3MS and assign a SFBC Liaison officer/SFBC Practitioner (refer to the [C3MS Guide – Referrals Instructions](#)).

4.4 Develop a SFBC/O18EI Program Plan

The following steps are for the allocated SFBC team member:

- a. Review the young person's transition plan (within the case plan) available in C3MS.
- b. Arrange a meeting with the young person, the carer and the DCP case worker (if required), to establish a relationship and explain the case management roles and responsibilities, and to negotiate the type of (quarterly) contact and independent living goals, using the [Stability Post Care Program Plan](#).
- c. The post guardianship programs provide a less intensive service than case management and are designed to support the young person in their family environment. Quarterly contact does not need to be face-to-face, and the type of contact can be negotiated (for example, telephone, video call, email). Should the young person require a more intensive case management service within this period, they will be referred to relevant Post Care Services, and the allocated SFBC team member will take a secondary support role.

The SFBC team member will contact the young person and carer at least quarterly to review the SFBC/O18EI Program Plan and ongoing eligibility; and provide referral, information and support to access services.

- d. Develop a SFBC/O18EI Program Plan with young person and carer(s).
- e. Use the [Stability Post Care Program Plan](#) to develop goals and actions aimed at the young person's independent living skills. Goals can cover a range of life and social skills that are aimed at preparing the young person for future independence including but not limited to finance and budgeting, cooking, managing a home, continuing education, applying for employment.

Both the young person and the carer must sign the Program Plan. The young person should sign the Program Plan once they have turned 18 years of age.

If the young person and carer are unable to sign the initial and subsequent SFBC/O18EI Program Plan, the carer and/or young person can provide written confirmation via email in lieu of signing the Program Plan.

The Program Plan should support the young person to remain connected to their family, community and culture.

- f. Upload the SFBC/O18EI Program Plan to C3MS.

4.5 Re-assign the child protection case

The allocated SFBC team member will close the service provision entry and re-assign the child protection case in C3MS to the allocated SFBC team member when eligibility is confirmed, when the young person has turned 18 years of age; and the SFBC/O18EI Program Plan has been completed.



For more information about how to re-assign the case, see [C3MS Guide – Case allocation and de-allocation](#).

4.6 Initiate the payment

The allocated SFBC team member will email the Carer Payments team to confirm eligibility and initiate the extension of the basic carer subsidy. The following information needs to be collected by the SFBC team member to carer payments:

- details about which post guardianship program the young person and their carer(s) are involved with
- the relevant identifying details of the carer and young person
- start date of engagement with the program, this may require back dating
- length of basic subsidy carer payment extension (for example: 12 months).

The SFBC team member will also email the endorsed application form to DCPPost18CarerPayments@sa.gov.au and ensure the young person's school/training details are up to date in C3MS, if applicable.

4.7 Implement and review the SFBC/O18EI Program Plan

The allocated SFBC team member is responsible for implementing the following actions:

- Referring young people to a service provider to support their transition to independent living and increase their skills.
- Contacting the young person and carer every three months to re-confirm eligibility and monitor progress in relation to the SFBC/O18EI Program Plan and associated actions.
- Seek cultural advice if the young person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and intending to access higher education pathway for university entrance.
- Contacting the young person and carer annually to review eligibility and progress in relation to the program plan.
- Request that a new Annual Agreement be completed by all parties to enable continued involvement in the program/initiative.
- Uploading the SFBC/O18EI program plan and any relevant documents to C3MS.

4.8 Accessing the education grant for the Over 18 Education Initiative

The education grant is paid at the beginning of each school term to assist with the education costs of the young person (refer to the [Carer Support Payments Handbook](#) for further information regarding the grant).

In addition to quarterly contact, the allocated SFBC team member must make contact and confirm the education status of the young person. Contact must occur prior to the last pay run before the start of each term.

When eligibility for the education grant has been confirmed, the SFBC member will email the Carer Payments team advising them of the outcome, including the relevant carer and young person details.

4.9 Holding the SFBC/O18EI carer payments

The post guardianship payment can be placed on hold (and not ceased) before the young person's 21st (25th for O18EI) birthday if both participants give notice of temporary change of circumstances (that affect their eligibility). A suspension period can be negotiated with the DCP.



Examples of times where payments can be put on hold could include the young person may be away from the home temporarily (for example, returning to Country for Sorry or ceremonial business, travelling overseas for a period of time), or the young person may be earning more than the income limit, but the longevity of the employment has not been established. For further guidance, refer to the SFBC Supervisor.

If a payment is placed on hold, the child protection case must remain open to then reinstate payments as required. To place the payments on hold, an email must be forwarded to DCPPost18CarerPayments@sa.gov.au by the SFBC team member to advise:

- the “placement status is on hold” to ensure the correct C3MS option is documented
- the start date, end date where known, and reason for the hold of carer payments
- the relevant identifying details of the carer and young person.

Following notice to end the arrangement prior to the young person’s 21st (25th for O18EI) birthday, the SFBC program plan should be reviewed, and planning undertaken to ensure that young person can move into suitable accommodation and access services if required.

4.10 Ending the SFBC program or O18EI arrangement due to ineligibility

The SFBC program or O18EI arrangement may end due to:

- planned reasons (for example, the young person wishes to move to independent living, or the young person reports they have begun full-time work, and their income exceeds the care payment)
- unplanned changes in circumstance (for example, irreparable breakdown of the arrangement)
- or the young person reaches the age of 21 years (SFBC) or 25 years (O18EI).

4.11 Case closure

The allocated SFBC team member may close the case at any time following consultation with the SFBC supervisor.

Indicators that case closure may be warranted include:

- young person is no longer eligible for support through the program
- young person attains 21 or 25 years of age
- payments have been placed on hold for a period of 12 months (continuous).

Refer to the [C3MS guide Case - How to Close](#) regarding the ending of the relevant post guardianship program.

5. Compliance, monitoring and evaluation

This procedure will be reviewed every three years, or more frequently if required.



6. Related documents

Related documents, forms, and templates
Stability Post Care Application Form
Stability Post Care Program Plan
Stability Post Care Factsheet
Stability Post Care Annual Agreement
Carer Support Payments Handbook
C3MS Referrals Instructions
C3MS Guide – Referrals
C3MS Guide – Case allocation and de-allocation
C3MS Guide - Case - How to Close

Document control

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1 October 2021	V1.0	FINAL Stability in Family-Based Care and Over 18 Education Initiative Procedure replaces Stability in Family-Based Care (Extending Carer Payments) Program Guideline. Revision includes the Over 18 Education Initiative and changes to LTGSP quarterly contact expectations.
4 October 2024	V1.1	Procedure reviewed in accordance with the DCP policy review cycle with minor updates.