

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

After Care Support Program

Program Guidelines
November 2009



THE AFTER CARE SUPPORT PROGRAM

Policy Context

The *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997* requires that the Minister should provide services to help persons who have been under the guardianship or in the custody of the Secretary during childhood to make a successful transition to adulthood.

Research indicates that young people leaving care are at greater risk of experiencing homelessness, unemployment, substance abuse, young parenthood, social isolation and mental health issues. The Report by the Tasmanian Ombudsman *Review of Claims of Abuse from Adults in State Care as Children* concluded that many adults who had been in care in Tasmania 'were people who have had their lives damaged by broken relationships, welfare dependency, substance abuse, prison terms, depression, low self esteem, under employment and low educational attainment' (2004, 36).

Program Objectives

The program objective is to assist Tasmanian care leavers to make a successful transition to adulthood.

The objective will be achieved through the following tasks:

1. Assist adult care leavers to understand information contained within their personal files held by the Department of Health and Human Services.
2. Assist adult care leavers to make contact with family members and significant others.
3. Refer adult care leavers to appropriate community based organisations including the CREATE Foundation and CLAN.
4. Provide financial assistance to eligible care leavers.

Program Streams

The After Care Support Program has two main streams, namely:

1. assistance to Tasmanian adult care leavers to access and understand their personal information and or to locate family members; and
2. financial assistance to Tasmanian care leavers who are aged 19 to 24 years.¹

¹ Care leavers aged 18 years should be assisted through a Case and Care Plan (After Care). Adults aged 18 years who were not supported by Case and Care Plan after leaving care may receive financial assistance through the After Care Support Program.

Program Linkages

The Department funds the CREATE Foundation to assist children and young people in care and care leavers up to the age of 25 years. The Department also funds the Care Leavers Australian Network (CLAN) to assist adults who have been in care in Tasmania.² The After Care Support Program will refer care leavers to CREATE and CLAN where additional support is required.

The After Care Support Program will also refer care leavers to other services, including the Transition to the Independent Living Allowance (TILA) supported housing and financial counselling services.

Successful transition to adulthood is enhanced through detailed planning before a young person leaves care. To assist the process of planning for leaving care, Child Protection Services, in consultation with young people in care, the CREATE Foundation, the Foster Carers Association of Tasmania (FCAT) and non-government organisations, has developed a leaving care package known as *Outta Here Your Options Your Choices*. Young people in care in Tasmania should have the opportunity to use the leaving care package to develop the required skills and knowledge to make a successful transition to adulthood.

As well as this, Child Protection Services involves young people in planning for a successful transition from care through the case and care planning process for children in care.

Management of the Program

Stream One:

Accessing and understanding personal information and/or locating family members

Accessing personal information

Adults who were in care³ in Tasmania may obtain their personal information by lodging a Privacy Request form with their nearest Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services Area Office. Adults who are living outside Tasmania may lodge the Privacy Request form with the After Care Support Program. There is no fee

² Although CLAN supports all adult care leavers, the majority of its members are older care leavers who were placed in orphanages and children's homes.

³ In care refers to any person for whom guardianship was transferred to the Minister under the Child Welfare Act 1960 or to the Secretary under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 and the person was placed in a departmentally approved and supported placement.

associated with the process of accessing personal information via a Privacy Request.

On the receipt of the Privacy Request form, the person who is responsible for collating the information contained on the file will advise the applicant that the application has been received and the anticipated timeframe to provide the requested information. If the file has been archived it may take several months to obtain the information.

At the time that the personal information is provided to an applicant, he or she will be advised that **additional assistance** for care leavers is available. All care leavers will be advised that assistance with understanding the information contained on their file and or assistance with locating family members is available through the After Care Support Program. A standard letter for advising care leavers is attached (Appendix A). Younger care leavers aged 19 to 24 years will also be advised that they are able to apply for financial assistance. A standard letter for younger care leavers is attached (Appendix B).

Additional assistance to understand information provided and/or locate family members

Care leavers may contact the After Care Support Program to arrange a suitable time to discuss the information contained on the file and or explore the mechanisms to locate family members.

It is recognised that care leavers have varying needs and circumstances and that some care leavers will only require one face to face meeting with the After Care Support Program to work through information contained within their personal file. However, other care leavers may need more than one meeting. As a general rule, care leavers may have up to three face to face sessions to work through their personal information and explore mechanisms to make contact with family members. In exceptional circumstances, for instance the care leavers experience in care involved high level of placement disruption, limited or no contact with family members, a history of substantiated abuse while in care and limited or no support during the transition from care, the Manager Adoption and Permanency Services may approve additional sessions.

Referral to community organisations

The After Care Support Program will advise care leavers about community based services including the CREATE Foundation and CLAN that are available to support them through affirmation of the range of emotions associated with being in care. A key intent of the After Care Support Program is to promote resilience for care leavers and the Program recognises that opportunities for resilience exist in every day social interactions within the wider community.

Thus the After Care Support Program encourages care leavers to participate in specific community activities that may be available through CREATE and CLAN as well as any other community of interest that may provide an opportunity for building resilience.

Stream Two:

Financial assistance for care leavers aged 19 to 24 years

Making an application for financial assistance

Care leavers aged 19 to 24 years must forward an application form (Appendix C) to the After Care Support Program. Departmental assistance for care leavers who are 18 years should be managed through a Case and Care Plan (After Care). That Plan may include a referral to the After Care Support Program for additional financial assistance between the ages of 19 and 24 years.

Role of the support person

The care leaver in completing the application may nominate a support person. The assessment of the application may involve discussion with the nominated support person to determine the most appropriate form of assistance.

Eligibility criteria

Adults aged 19 to 24 years inclusive who have been in long term care in Tasmania may receive financial assistance to access goods and services that support and promote a successful transition to adulthood. The intention is that funds will be used in a flexible and creative way to promote the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable care leavers in Tasmania. Funds for the program are limited to \$90,000 per annum. The demand for assistance may exceed available funds, and funds will be allocated in accordance with the following criteria:

- Financial assistance will not replace mainstream services. For instance applicants who apply for bond, rent or emergency assistance will be referred to existing services.
- If the young person has not received the TILA payment, this payment will be accessed before the provision of financial assistance under the After Care Support Program.
- Funds will target young people who were in Departmental care for an extended period of time.
- Young people who were in an out of home care placement on a continuous basis for more than two years or more from the age of 14 years will receive priority assistance.
- Financial assistance should promote young people's capacity to improve their life chances, especially in the areas of undertaking further education,

- enhancing employment opportunities and strengthening connectedness with family members and the wider community.
- Financial assistance may also be used to promote personal strengths and resilience, for instance through funding of creative pursuits or therapeutic services that are not available through mainstream services.
 - The level of financial assistance per care leaver is up to \$2,500 per year.
 - Care leavers may receive financial assistance more than once during the period of a year provided that the total level of assistance does not exceed \$2,500 per year.
 - In exceptional circumstances, additional financial assistance may be approved to support care leavers during subsequent years providing that the maximum amount does not exceed \$2,500 per year and there are available funds within the program. Care leavers who are participating in a formal educational program will receive priority for additional assistance over subsequent years. Financial assistance ceases when the care leavers are 25 years.
 - Departmental financial assistance provided as part of a Case and Care Plan (After Care) will not reduce the maximum level of assistance. However, the outcomes of previous assistance should be considered as part of the assessment of the young person's capacity to use financial assistance to improve life chances.
 - A young person under the age of 19 years who was in long term care during adolescence and left care without the support of a Case and Care Plan (After Care) may receive financial assistance under the Program.

Assessment process

The After Care Support Program will assess applications for financial assistance. The assessment process will ensure that the application meets the program's eligibility criteria and that funds are available. The outcomes from assistance provided as part of a Case and Care Plan (After Care) as well as the role of a nominated support person and links to other services will be considered as part of the assessment.

The intent of the program is to provide care leavers with opportunities to make a successful transition to adulthood and build resilience. Providing that the applicant has a clear intent to use the financial assistance to improve his or her circumstances and life outcomes, the assessment process will not involve a detailed examination of the applicant's capacity to use the assistance as intended.

However, if Child Protection Services provided the applicant with assistance through a Case and Care Plan (After Care), the outcomes and achievements during that period should be considered and where warranted, the provision of financial assistance should be managed with the aim of achieving the optimum

benefit for the applicant. This may mean that applicants who have a recent history of difficulties in managing money will be assisted through the direct purchase of services.

Approval process

The Manager of Adoption and Permanency Services must approve financial assistance and the method of payment.

Payment of financial assistance

Assistance may be paid directly to the applicant via an electronic transfer of funds to the applicant's nominated account or by purchase of goods or services for the applicant. Applicants will be advised in writing regarding the:

- goods or services for which the funds have been approved for;
- amount of funds that have been approved; and
- method of payment.

If the method of payment is to be by transfer of funds to the applicant, the applicant will be requested to provide his or her account details to enable the transfer of funds.

Applications that are not approved

If the application is not approved, the applicant will be advised in writing including brief written reasons for the rationale for the rejection of the application. This will not necessarily preclude a subsequent lodgement and approval of an application.

Budget Management

The funds will be managed within the budget allocation for the Program. It is anticipated that demand for assistance will fluctuate over the financial year and available funds will be allocated on a quarterly basis to ensure that there is capacity to respond to high priority applications throughout the financial year. The Manager Adoption and Permanency Services may exceed the quarterly budget allocation if there are critical timeframes, for instance the purchase of text books to coincide with the academic year. Funds that are not fully expended in one quarter will be carried over to the next quarter.

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Program

The Program will be monitored by the Manager Adoption and Permanency Services through quarterly data on:

- number of requests for assistance to discuss information contained on personal files;
- number of requests for assistance to locate family members;

- number of care leavers who were supported by a face to face session;
- number of care leavers who were supported through more than three face to face sessions;
- number of Tasmanian care leavers who were referred to after care support services in other states and territories;
- number of face to face sessions with care leavers provided on behalf of other states and territories;
- number of care leavers referred to the CREATE Foundation;
- number of care leavers referred to CLAN;
- number of care leavers referred to other organisations;
- number of applications for financial assistance;
- number of applications approved; and
- broad categories for which assistance was provided to care leavers.

Program monitoring will inform the level of demand/unmet demand and the areas in which adult care leavers require assistance. Program monitoring will inform the future direction of the After Care Support Program.

Letter to care leavers not eligible for financial assistance

Dear

I enclose a copy of the information contained on your personal file that the Department of Health and Human Services kept during the period that you were either a Ward of the State or Under the Guardianship of the Secretary. Information about other people that appears on your file has been deleted from the enclosed copy where it might breach their privacy.

The Department recognises that you may require assistance to understand aspects of the information provided and that you may wish to make contact with members of your family but you might be unsure how to go about this.

If you would like to discuss any of the information within your file or explore how you might locate members of your family, you should contact the After Care Support Program to make an appointment by phone on 6222 7308 during normal business hours.

The Program is based in Hobart. However, if you have difficulties in accessing the Program because of difficulties with travel it may be possible to arrange an appointment in a more convenient location.

Yours sincerely

Letter to care leavers eligible for financial assistance

Dear

I enclose a copy of the information contained on your personal file that the Department of Health and Human Services kept during the period that you were either a Ward of the State or Under the Guardianship of the Secretary. Information about other people that appears on your file has been deleted from the enclosed copy.

The Department recognises that you may require assistance to understand aspects of the information provided and that you may wish to make contact with members of your family but you might be unsure how to go about this.

If you would like to discuss any of the information within your file or explore how you might locate members of your family, you should contact the After Care Support Program to make an appointment by phone on 6222 7308 during normal business hours.

The Program also provides limited financial assistance to assist Tasmanian care leavers under the age 25 years make a successful transition to adulthood. Assistance is generally provided to enable younger care leavers to:

- participate in educational or skills development programs and activities;
- improve their employment opportunities;
- develop family and community relationships;
- participate in creative activities that promote personal strengths; and
- access counselling and other professional services.

Available funds will be used in flexible and creative ways to improve the transition to a successful adulthood for care leavers. You may apply for any assistance that you believe will improve your future.

I have attached a copy of the After Care Support Program Funding Application Form. You, or your support person, should complete the form and forward it to the After Care Support Program, PO Box 538 Hobart Tasmania 7001. If you are unsure about how to complete any section, please contact the After Care Support Program on 6222 7308.

The Program is based in Hobart. However, if you have difficulties in accessing the Program because of difficulties with travel it may be possible to arrange an appointment in a more convenient location.

Yours sincerely

Contact: Jane Monaghan
 Phone: (03) 6222 7373
 Facsimilie: (03) 6223 1343
 E-mail: adoption.service@dhhs.tas.gov.au

**AFTER CARE SUPPORT PROGRAM
 Application form**

SURNAME:

GIVEN NAMES:

Have you been known by any other names? If yes, please list

SURNAME: **GIVEN NAMES:**

SURNAME: **GIVEN NAMES:**

Date of Birth: **Place of Birth:**

Previous Names/If applicable:

Address:

Telephone No: Home: Mobile:

Email address:

Have you accessed your personal file for the period/s you were in care? Yes No

If not, do you wish to have a copy of the file? Yes No

Do you require assistance to contact family members? Yes No

I want the After Care Support Service to search for:

NAME	RELATIONSHIP

I want the After Care Support Service to contact:

NAME	RELATIONSHIP

Are you requesting financial assistance? (Only available if you are under 25 and you must have accessed a **Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA)** to be eligible for funding from the After Care Support Program Yes No

Have you received financial assistance through TILA? Yes No

You may wish to involve a support person. If so please give name of support person and contact details:

.....

<p>Signature:</p> <p>Date:</p>	<p>Please return this application form to: After Care Support Program GPO Box 538, Hobart 7001</p>
--	---