



Education and Learning for Children and Young People in Out-of-Home Care

This handbook provides information about education pathways and services available to support the learning needs of Western Australian children and young people living in out-of-home care.

October 2026



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Acknowledgement of Country and People

The Department of Communities acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands throughout Western Australia and pays its respects to Elders past and present, recognising their enduring contributions to community, culture and country.

We recognise and respect the diversity, cultural heritage, values and beliefs of Aboriginal people, and acknowledge their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

We extend this respect to Aboriginal family members, community members, caregivers and employees across the Department of Communities, recognising and valuing the skills, experience and contributions they bring to supporting children and young people in Western Australia.



Introduction

About the Handbook

This handbook provides information about education for children and young people¹ in out-of-home care (OOHC)². It provides practical guidance to help recognise learning and support needs, understand available education options, and make informed decisions about a child or young person's education, helping them feel safe, supported and confident in achieving their learning potential.

The handbook provides information about educational supports at every stage – from early learning opportunities, through primary and secondary school and into post-school options for young people up to age 25. This includes services that support Aboriginal³ children and young people, those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds, and those living with disability and/or additional learning needs.

It is designed to support all members of a child or young person's care team⁴, including carers, parents, and Department of Communities (Communities) caseworkers, to navigate the educational journey, while ensuring the child or young person's best interests, wellbeing and voice remain central to decision-making. The handbook promotes culturally responsive approaches that recognise the importance of maintaining connections to family, community, culture, and language.

Why Education is Important

Many children and young people in OOHC have experienced, and continue to experience, challenges that have an ongoing impact on their learning and development. Experiences of trauma and instability in care can make it harder for children and young people to adjust to school environments, engage in learning and reach their potential.

¹ The term 'child' or 'children' will be used in this document to refer to a child in care and is most commonly used when discussing younger children. The term 'young person' or 'young people' is generally used to refer to children in care who are in their teenage years or those who have left care, up to the age of 25.

² OOHC refers to children who are in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (also known as the Director General) of Communities and placed in care arrangements outside of their own family home, such as foster care, family care, group homes, after-hours placement and transitional high needs care.

³ The word Aboriginal is used throughout this resource and is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

⁴ Care team members will vary depending on the child's needs, pre-existing family and community relationships and their individual circumstances, and will evolve over time as the child's needs change. Care teams may include parents and family members, carers, members of the child's community, the Communities case worker and other staff such as psychologists, Aboriginal Practice Leaders and Education Officers, other case workers or professionals who may be working with the child, for example through an OOHC placement, residential care staff (where the child is in a residential care facility), or a cultural representative (e.g. family member, Elder, community member).

These challenges can affect wellbeing, educational attainment, and future employment opportunities.⁵

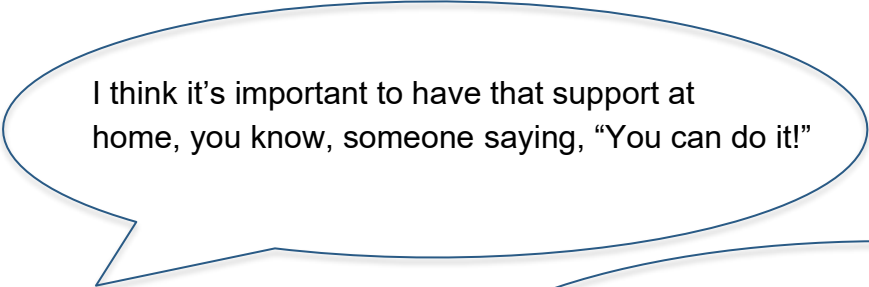
With the right support, children and young people in OOHC can thrive academically and build strong foundations for a successful transition into adulthood. All children and young people in OOHC have their own unique qualities, and many demonstrate remarkable resilience, adaptability, and inner strength. By recognising and building on these strengths, and nurturing their potential and sense of identity, they can be better supported and empowered throughout their educational journey.



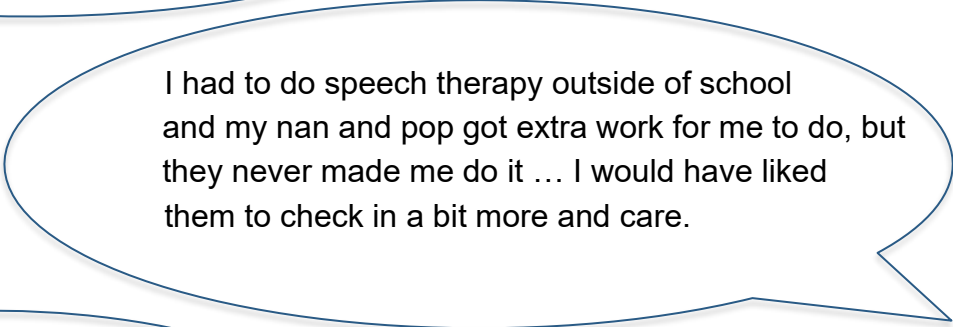
Members of a child's care team play a vital role in supporting learning by:

- helping children to build the skills and knowledge they need to thrive,
- encouraging engagement in learning, and
- setting high expectations and aspirations.

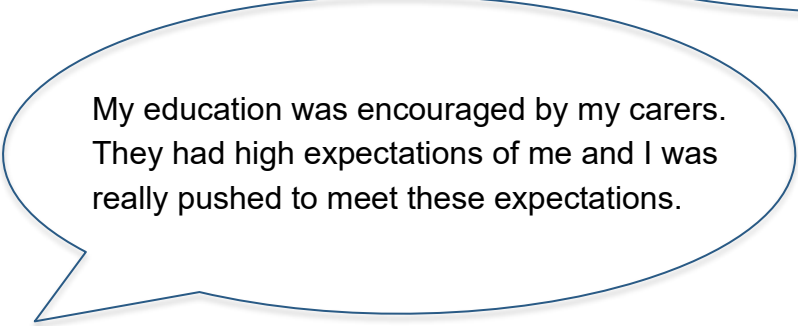
⁵ [Lima, F., Maclean, M., & O'Donnell, M. \(2018\). Exploring outcomes for children who have experienced out-of-home care. Perth: Telethon Kids Institute.](#)

What young people say ...⁶

I think it's important to have that support at home, you know, someone saying, "You can do it!"



I had to do speech therapy outside of school and my nan and pop got extra work for me to do, but they never made me do it ... I would have liked them to check in a bit more and care.



My education was encouraged by my carers. They had high expectations of me and I was really pushed to meet these expectations.

Decisions about a Child or Young Person in OOHC

Many decisions about early childhood education and care (ECEC), school enrolment, and the services, supports and assessments required for children and young people in OOHC need to be made or approved by their Communities caseworker. [Who can say OK in WA?](#) is a resource that provides guidance on who can make decisions for children and young people in care. It includes an overview of the decisions relating to education and schooling, such as:

- enrolment decisions
- informing the school that the child is in care
- attending parent-teacher interviews
- providing permission for excursions, camps and other school-related activities.

⁶ [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](#)

When making decisions relating to education, consideration should be given to the child or young person's cultural, linguistic, and religious background. Where appropriate, culturally responsive practices, interpreter services and translated information should be used to support the participation of carers, parents and family members in educational decision-making.

Later sections of this handbook provide more detailed guidance on educational decision-making at different stages of a child or young person's learning journey.

Hearing the voices of children and young people

Children and young people often see the world differently from adults because of their age, experiences, and stage of development. Regardless of their age, abilities, or circumstances, they have a fundamental right to express their views and to have those views heard, respected, and considered in decisions that affect them.

Children and young people should be given clear, developmentally appropriate information, as well as genuine opportunities to take part in decisions that affect their lives, including decisions about their education. This may involve providing information in culturally appropriate formats, using interpreters where needed, and ensuring communication methods are responsive to the child's language, culture, developmental stage and individual needs.

The care team plays a significant role in helping children and young people recognise that their views matter. They also support them to develop the skills needed to understand decisions and express their thoughts safely and confidently. This includes developing the confidence and ability to question or challenge decisions when needed.

The [Charter of Rights for Children and Young People in Care](#) helps children and young people understand their rights and how they should be treated whilst in care, with varied formats available to cater for different age groups.

The Communities [Advocate for Children in Care](#) provides children and young people in care with an independent, trusted person who helps them understand their rights, have their voice heard, and raise concerns about decisions affecting their lives, including those related to their education.

The Advocate will:

- listen to children and young people, help them say what they want to say and help get adults to listen.
- give information and advice about what children and young people are entitled to, and how they should be treated.

- support children and young people if they want to have a decision reviewed or complain about things they believe are wrong.
- speak to people in authority about what young people say works or doesn't work in their lives.

Members of the care team should ensure young people in OOHC understand the Advocate's role and know how to access this support when needed. Refer to [Have your say! Get heard!](#) for further information.

Education Planning



Care Planning

Communities caseworkers coordinate annual [care planning](#) processes, working closely with the child or young person whilst collaborating with the wider care team. Meetings and discussions are held to gather different input and perspectives, which help to identify a child's needs and plan for how these will be met.

Care planning includes supporting children and young people to complete Viewpoint questionnaires. Viewpoint is an online tool that gathers feedback from children and young people in care about their safety, wellbeing, relationships, and care experience. It supports their participation in care planning and helps identify the services and supports they need.

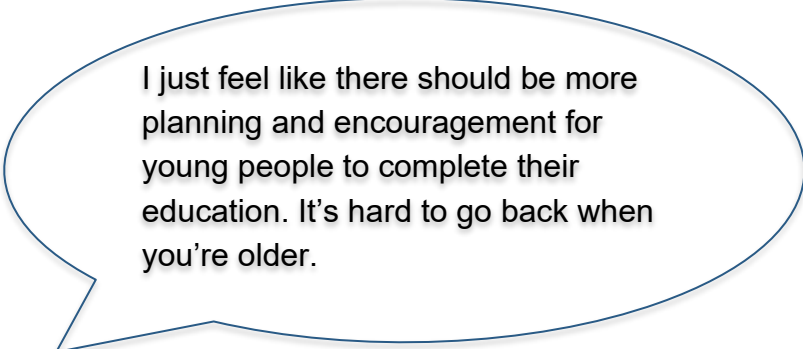
There are nine dimensions of care that provide a framework to guide care planning and address the diverse needs experienced by a child or young person in care. These include safety, care arrangements, health, education, social and family relationships, recreation and leisure, emotional and behavioural development, identity, and culture, and legal and financial.

Children and young people should receive consistent support for their learning, development, and education during their time in care — from early childhood, throughout their school years, and as they prepare for adulthood.

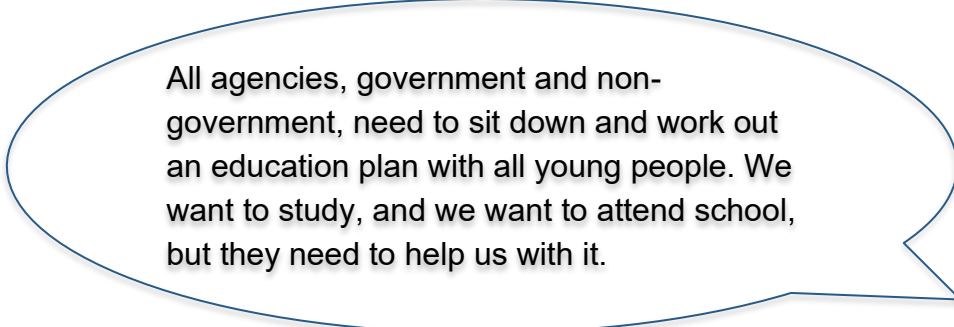
[Education Planning](#) processes should clearly set out the child's learning goals, the supports they need and how the care team will collaborate with schools and other services to support their learning and education. This includes maintaining stability and consistency by minimising disruptions to learning environments and schooling — such as avoiding school or ECEC changes wherever possible and scheduling meetings, appointments, and family contact outside school hours and away from school grounds.

Care plans should consider whether there are any concerns for a child or young person's learning and development, taking into account the views of care team members and information identified through the [Needs Assessment Tool](#) (NAT). The NAT is a case management tool that helps workers and care teams identify, assess and respond to the changing needs of children and young people in OOH. School reports, documented plans and developmental assessments (including Child Health Checks) will help inform care planning. The care plan should record any concerns about a child or young person's development, any diagnoses, whether they have been identified as being at educational risk, and if further assessment is needed. The care plan should also outline clear actions, strategies and supports to address identified concerns, support the child's learning and development, and monitor progress over time.

What young people say ...⁷



I just feel like there should be more planning and encouragement for young people to complete their education. It's hard to go back when you're older.



All agencies, government and non-government, need to sit down and work out an education plan with all young people. We want to study, and we want to attend school, but they need to help us with it.

Education Officers

Communities employs qualified teachers as Education Officers to support children and young people in OOHC to engage in and benefit from education across school and other learning settings. Education Officers provide expert advice, advocate for educational needs, and offer practical support to Communities staff and the broader care team.

Education Officers:

- **Support carers and families** by providing guidance and support, including helping carers and care teams understand the learning needs of the children and young people in their care and offering strategies to support their learning at home or at school.
- **Collaborate with schools** to ensure that children and young people in OOHC receive the right support. This may involve liaising with teachers, school administrators and other education professionals to create, monitor, and review documented plans.
- **Provide advice and support to Communities staff** on programs, services and available pathways that help improve education outcomes for children and young people in OOHC.

Education Officers understand the needs of children and young people in OOHC, how schools work, and the alternative or vocational options available when mainstream schooling is not the right fit. They can also offer guidance on tutoring, as well as

⁷ [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](#)

recommend recreational programs and activities that help children and young people learn, grow, and feel supported.

Documented Planning

All children and young people in OOHC who attend school must have a documented plan that is reviewed by school staff at least twice a year. School staff develop plans that outline the strengths, needs and challenges of the child or young person, and how their individual needs will be supported, including their academic, social-emotional, behavioural, attendance and engagement needs. A documented plan helps everyone understand their roles and responsibilities and provides a framework for monitoring progress towards agreed goals.

Depending on the focus, documented plans may be developed by classroom teachers, school leaders, or other support staff. Staff may also consult with their school psychologist or other specialist staff to guide planning, particularly when addressing student wellbeing and mental health needs.

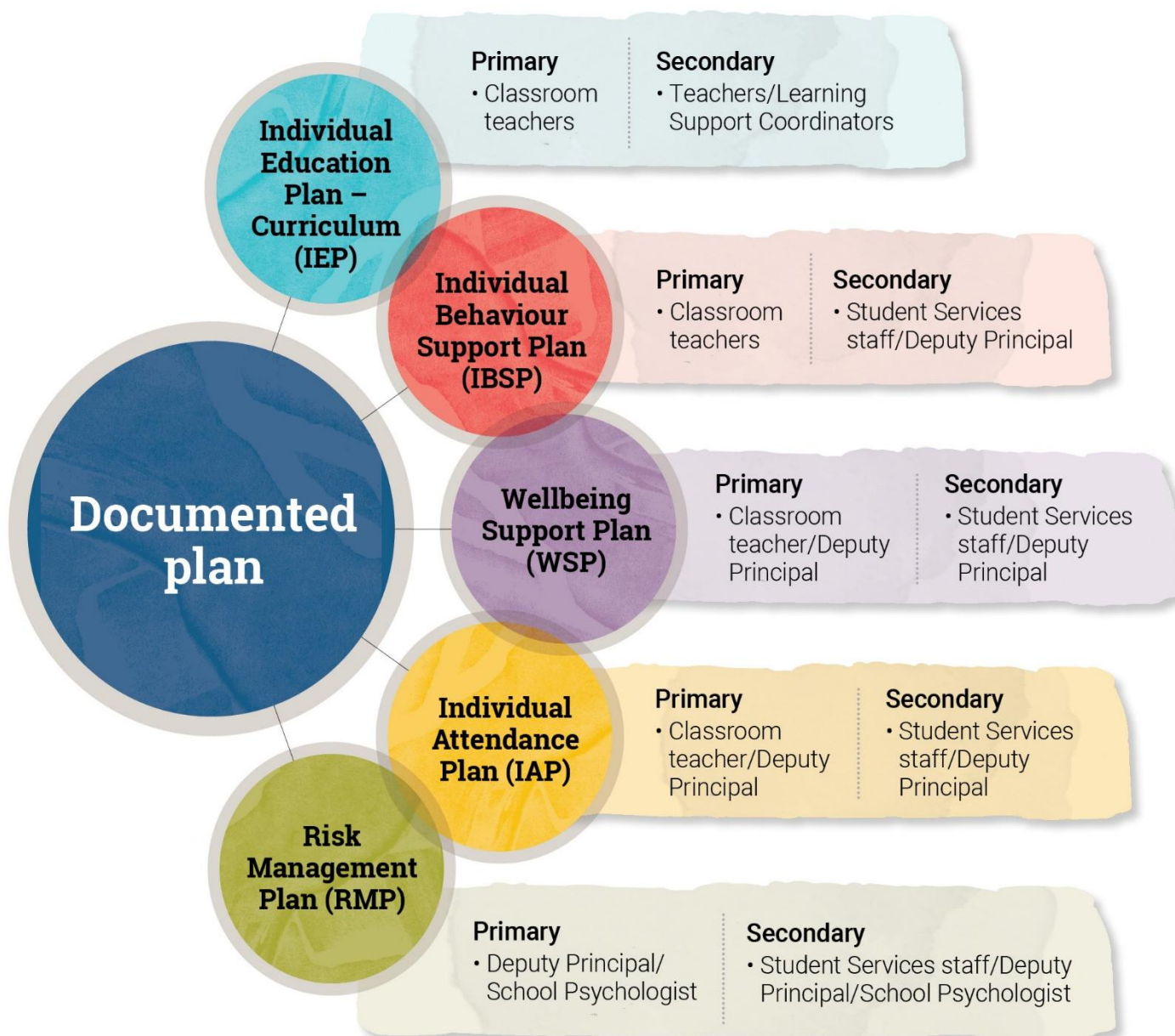
Documented plans are developed for students with a diagnosed or imputed disability who require teaching and learning adjustments, students requiring behaviour or wellbeing support, students with long-term health conditions, students with persistent absences from school, and students who present a risk of harm to themselves or others. Schools are required to provide the Communities caseworker with a copy of the documented plan within reasonable timeframes.

When appropriate, schools seek input from the student and their care team to ensure planning decisions are guided by those who know the student best. Children and young people may also be given opportunities to review and discuss their documented plan, helping them understand expectations and the supports the school has put in place.

Schools will often involve members of a child or young person's care team in ongoing case management meetings. At times, they may also involve external providers and other education-based specialist staff, such as Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, school psychologists, learning support coordinators (LSCs), and school nurses, to provide relevant advice and support.

In cases where children and young people have diverse needs across behaviour, learning and wellbeing, current guidance for Western Australian public schools promotes the development of a holistic, integrated plan that considers a student's learning, behaviour and wellbeing support needs within a single document. However, carers and other members of the care team may notice that some schools, including independent schools, continue to use separate plans to address specific areas of need.

Examples of these plans, and the school staff typically involved in developing them, are outlined below.



Cultural Support Planning

All Aboriginal and CaLD children and young people in OOHC must have a [Cultural Support Plan](#) that recognises and reflects their individual connection to culture, Country, cultural values, faith, and family traditions, and outlines how these will be supported and maintained. For Aboriginal children and young people, cultural support plans should be developed and reviewed with input from family members, Elders and other culturally authoritative people, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Aboriginal Representative Organisations (AROs) are playing a growing role in developing cultural support plans and supporting Aboriginal children and young people in OOHC to maintain their connection to culture, community and Country.

Cultural support planning is aligned with the Communities' [Aboriginal Cultural Framework](#), which provides guidance and promotes cultural safety, cultural competences and culturally responsive practice when supporting Aboriginal children, young people and families.



Supporting Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is important for children and young people. It helps them to understand who they are and where they come from. When children and young people learn about their family traditions, languages, and stories, they feel a stronger sense of belonging and

connection to the people around them, which builds confidence and supports resilience.⁸ For children and young people in OOHC, knowing their own personal and cultural history, and experiencing a strong connection to culture - particularly through relationships with people that are important to them - can be healing and can improve mental health and wellbeing.

Cultural Support at School

A strong cultural identity and connection to culture, language, family, and community can help children and young people in OOHC cope with change, navigate challenges, and maintain a positive sense of self as they grow. Importantly, this will support their ability to thrive at school and engage positively in their education.

Culturally responsive learning environments create the conditions for Aboriginal and CaLD children and young people, and their families and caregivers, to experience cultural safety, enhanced wellbeing, and meaningful engagement in learning and achievement.

Supporting Aboriginal children and young people at school

The Western Australian Department of Education's [Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework](#) supports schools to create culturally responsive learning environments that build on the strengths of Aboriginal students, engage Aboriginal students in their learning, and enable them to thrive academically and socially. Using this Framework, schools work with Aboriginal students, their families and caregivers to build strong relationships and put strategies in place that support wellbeing, engagement and learning.

Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers play a significant role in strengthening connections between Aboriginal students, their families, and the school. They know the staff, understand the school environment, and can often resolve concerns early, before they escalate.

If a child or young person is finding things difficult or needs extra support, an Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer can be a trusted partner in supporting wellbeing and helping them engage in their learning. Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers can be contacted via the school's main number, and meetings can be arranged on request to discuss individual support needs as required.

⁸ [Connection to community, culture and support | Commissioner for Children and Young People WA](#)

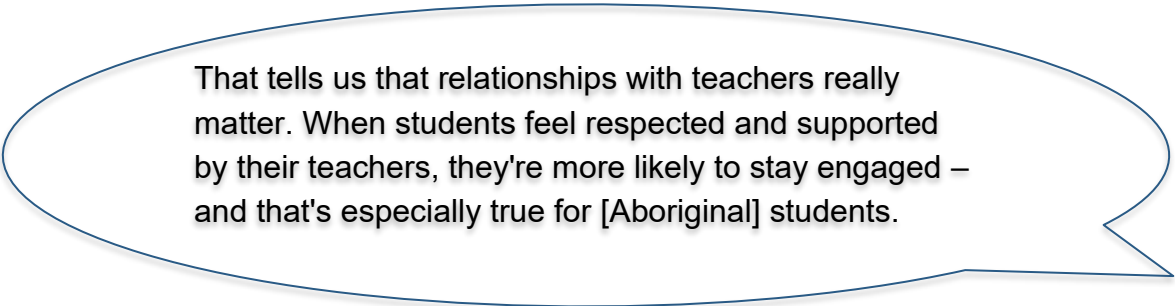
When schools are culturally responsive and actively recognise and value Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal children and young people are supported to:

- feel safe to share their experiences and trust they will be heard
- feel a sense of belonging and connection
- feel respected and proud of their identity and culture
- see themselves and their cultures reflected in the learning environment
- build their cultural identity
- feel more motivated to attend and
- have the confidence needed to persist and succeed.

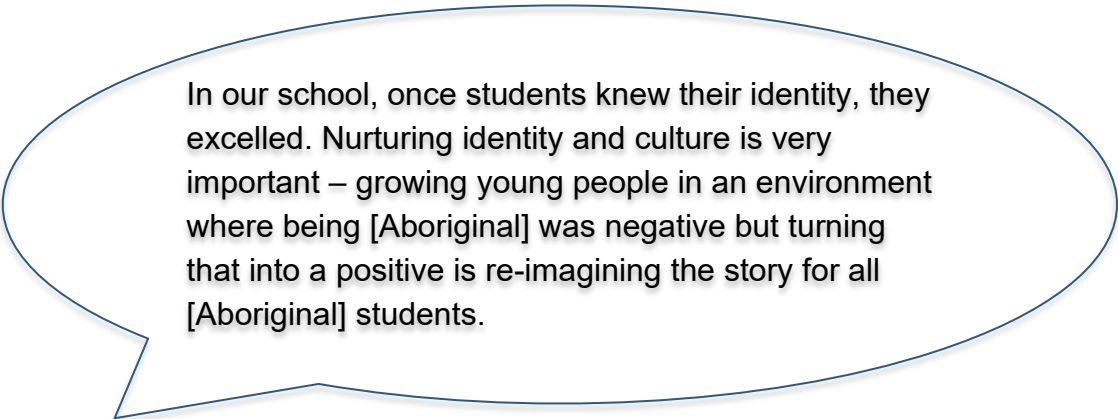
Aboriginal students often report that their motivation to attend school is linked to the quality of their relationships with teachers.⁹

Aboriginal students also benefit greatly from attending schools that provide culturally responsive programs, opportunities, and spaces to support learning and encourage school completion.

What young people say¹⁰



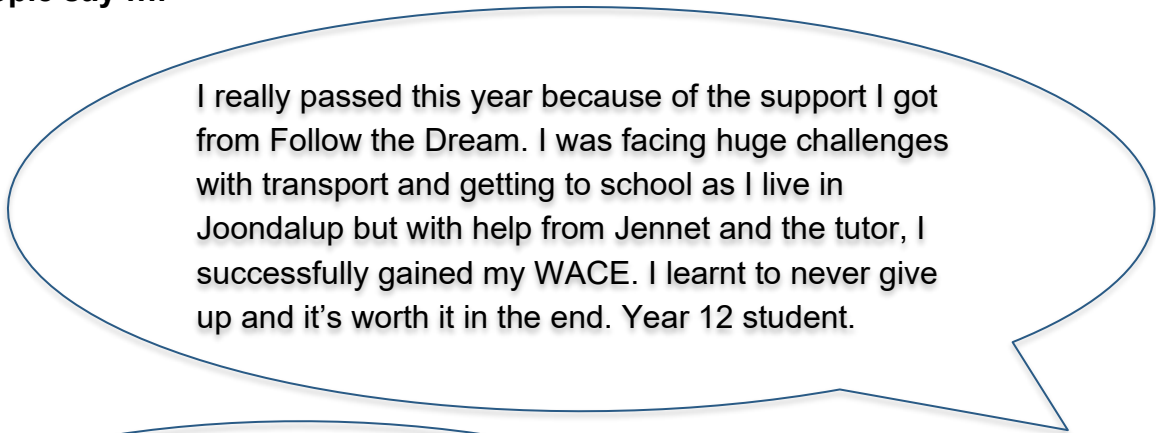
That tells us that relationships with teachers really matter. When students feel respected and supported by their teachers, they're more likely to stay engaged – and that's especially true for [Aboriginal] students.



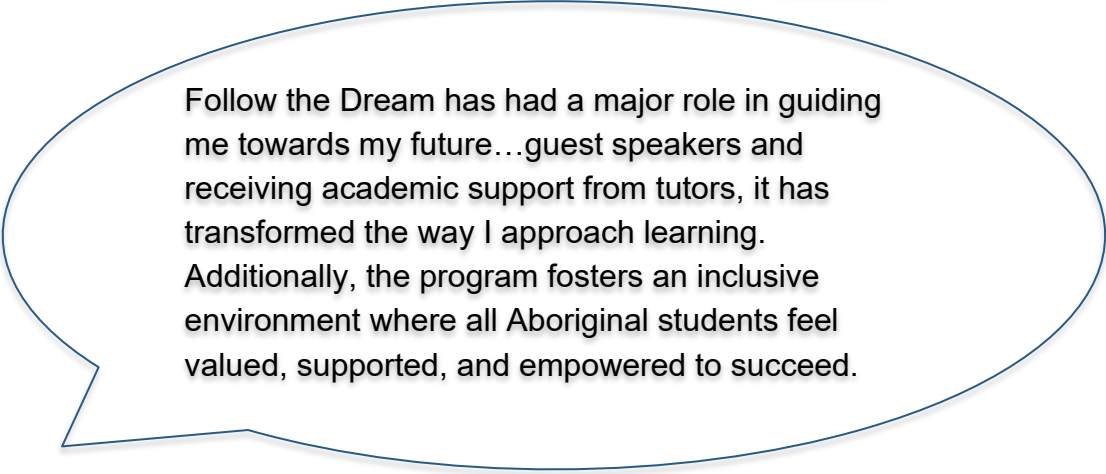
In our school, once students knew their identity, they excelled. Nurturing identity and culture is very important – growing young people in an environment where being [Aboriginal] was negative but turning that into a positive is re-imagining the story for all [Aboriginal] students.

⁹ [ECU | Education aspirations high among Indigenous youth but access still failing them](#)

¹⁰ [Award-winning educator on improving outcomes for Aboriginal students](#)

What young people say¹¹

I really passed this year because of the support I got from Follow the Dream. I was facing huge challenges with transport and getting to school as I live in Joondalup but with help from Jennet and the tutor, I successfully gained my WACE. I learnt to never give up and it's worth it in the end. Year 12 student.



Follow the Dream has had a major role in guiding me towards my future...guest speakers and receiving academic support from tutors, it has transformed the way I approach learning. Additionally, the program fosters an inclusive environment where all Aboriginal students feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

Additional information about educational supports and services for Aboriginal students can be found in Section 4 of this Handbook

Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD) students at school

The Department of Education's [Multicultural Plan 2026–2029](#) outlines their commitment to provide a culturally responsive education system – creating harmonious and inclusive school communities, developing culturally responsive policies, programs and services, and embedding cultural diversity across the school system.

For CaLD children and young people in OOHC, maintaining connections to culture, language and community can be an important protective factor that supports identity, belonging and positive educational outcomes.

Many schools support CaLD students through targeted programs such as English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) support, and [Intensive English Centres](#) help eligible, newly arrived students to learn English while accessing the curriculum.

¹¹ [Award-winning educator on improving outcomes for Aboriginal students](#)

Schools also have access to interpreting services which are commonly used for enrolment meetings, parent-teacher interviews, student wellbeing and behaviour discussions, support planning meetings and important school communications.

For some children and young people from CaLD backgrounds, educational engagement and learning may be affected by factors such as language barriers, interrupted schooling, migration or refugee experiences, family separation, experiences of discrimination, and the challenges of adapting to a new cultural environment. These factors should be understood within the child's broader circumstances and not be interpreted as indicators of ability or potential.

When these experiences are recognised, and children and young people receive culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate support, they feel included, develop a strong sense of belonging and are more likely to achieve positive educational outcomes. Schools should work collaboratively with children and young people, caseworkers, family members, and other members of the care team to understand each child or young person's individual circumstances and needs, and connect them with additional support where needed.

Communities Education Officers and student services staff within schools can assist children and young people from CaLD backgrounds to access appropriate supports in their local area. The [Multicultural Service Centre](#) is also a useful point of contact for information, advice, and referrals to services that support CaLD children, young people, and families across Western Australia.

When schools recognise, respect and value cultural and linguistic diversity, CaLD children and young people are supported to:

- Feel safe, welcomed and included
- Develop a sense of belonging and connection to their school community
- Maintain pride in their cultural identity, language and heritage
- Build positive relationships with teachers and peers
- Access learning opportunities that meet their individual needs and
- Participate fully in school life and achieve their educational potential.

Planning for Children and Young People with Disability and/or Additional Needs

Children and young people in OOHC are more likely to experience learning, developmental, behavioural and emotional challenges. Some may have diagnosed conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), while others may experience difficulties associated with trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In many cases, a combination of factors may be contributing to a child or young person's learning and support needs. While some enter care with identified disabilities or additional needs, others may show emerging concerns over time, highlighting the importance of ongoing observation, assessment and coordinated support.

Communities caseworkers play an important role in ensuring that children in OOHC with disability or developmental concerns receive appropriate assessment and access to available supports. This may involve working with Communities Regional Intensive Support (RIS) Coordinators and other professionals for advice and support, coordinating referrals, supporting access to disability services, and assisting with National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) processes where appropriate.

If a child or young person is deemed eligible for the NDIS, the Communities caseworker collaborates with their care team, and other relevant professionals to prepare for the NDIS planning meeting. This preparation involves gathering comprehensive information about the child or young person's needs, strengths, and goals — such as their daily support requirements, existing services, and any identified gaps in care.¹²

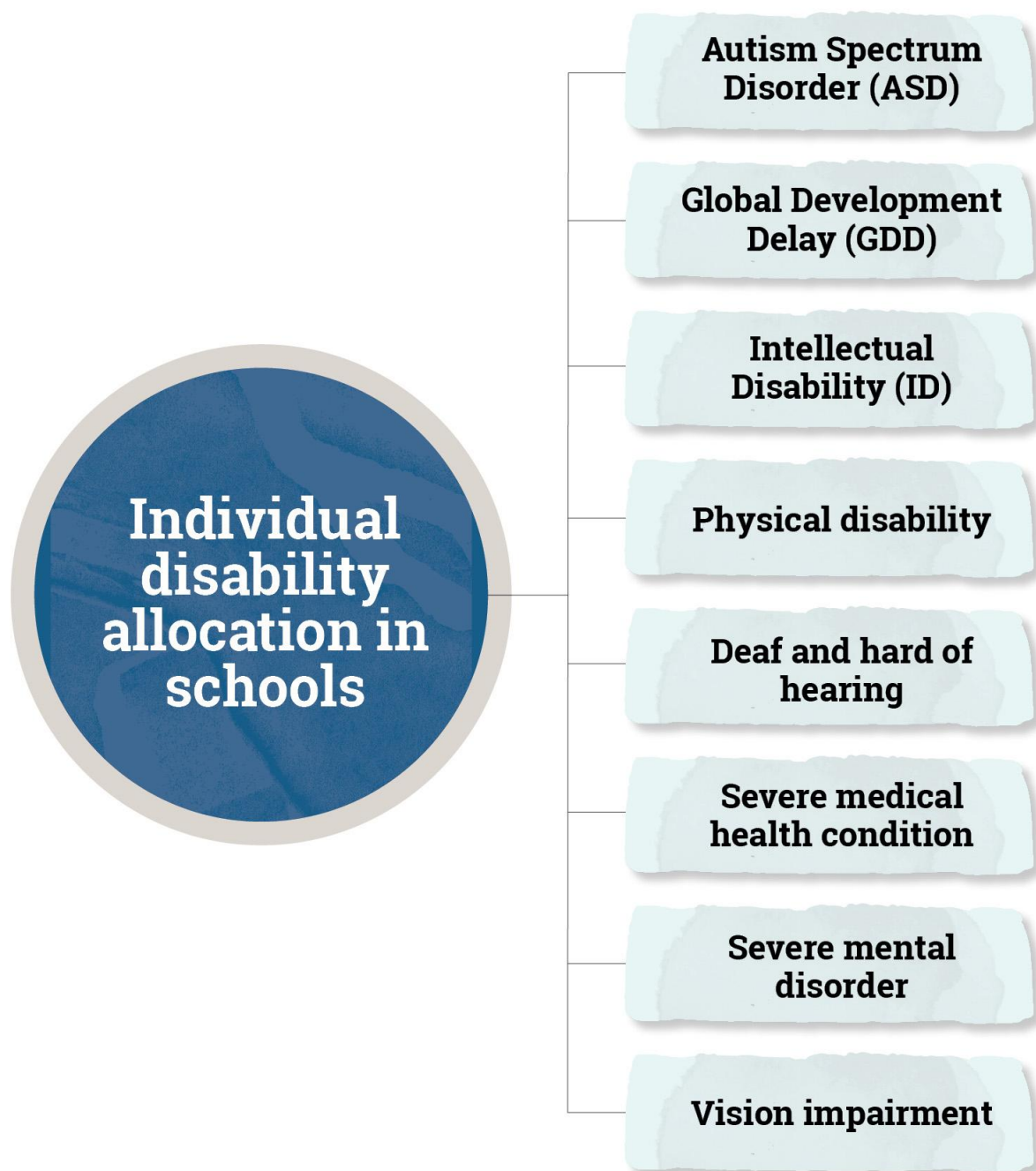
The Department of Education's [Children with special educational needs](#) and Developmental Disability WA's [Off to School](#) guides provide helpful information and advice about education options available for children and young people with disability or developmental delay in WA.

In-School Support

All children and young people with disability and/or developmental delay can apply to enrol at their local government school, and schools are required to provide reasonable adjustments that support their individual learning needs.

If a child or young person has a diagnosed disability that falls within one of the following eight categories, their school may apply for additional funding, subject to the Department of Education's eligibility requirements. This support is referred to as Individual Disability Allocation (IDA).

¹² Department of Communities [Child Protection Guide](#)

Categories of Disability and IDA

IDA funding can be used by schools in a variety of ways, as outlined below.



Any concerns about a child or young person's learning should be discussed with their caseworker as early as possible, so appropriate supports can be arranged. If additional educational support is required, the school should work with Communities staff and relevant members of the care team, to plan for their needs. Information about a child or young person's diagnosis should be shared with the school by the Communities caseworker, as this information is required to support the school's application for additional funding.

At any stage of their education, children and young people may require additional assessment by a paediatrician, clinical psychologist, or another qualified professional. They may also be referred to specialised services such as speech pathology, occupational therapy, or psychological services. Where this is required, the Communities caseworker will liaise with school staff, coordinate referrals, and provide ongoing information and support to members of the care team throughout the process.

Information about the rights of children and young people with disability in the education system, and inclusive education is available through [Children and Young People with Disability Australia](#) and [Developmental Disability WA](#).

Education Support

[Education support schools, centres and programs](#) cater for the unique educational and personal needs of children with disability. They provide targeted and individualised support for students with disability and complex needs.

- Education support schools are standalone schools that offer highly individualised educational programs for eligible children with disability.
- Education support centres share a site with a primary or secondary school and offer individualised educational programs for eligible children with disability.
- [Specialised deaf education](#) is available at one primary and two secondary school locations in the metropolitan area. Support for spoken and signed communication at all stages is provided via the School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory – see section below.
- [Language Development Centres](#) (LDCs) offer specialist early intervention programs for children in the early years of schooling who have a speech and language impairment. There are five LDCs located at mainstream schools in the metropolitan area.
- [Specialised Learning Programs](#) (SLPs) deliver tailored support that promotes academic growth, social-emotional development and the overall wellbeing of children and young people with autism in selected metropolitan primary and secondary schools.

Further information about education support schools, centres and programs in WA can be found [here](#) or through [Schools Online](#) (Click 'Advanced Search' and select 'Schools with education support programs').

Support Services for Schools

The Schools of Special Educational Needs support public schools and build staff capability through delivering targeted assistance, professional learning, specialist planning support, and direct assistance to classroom teachers where required.

These specialist services include:

- The [School of Special Educational Needs: Disability](#) — supports WA public schools to create inclusive learning environments, ensuring students with disability or additional needs access the curriculum on the same basis as their peers through expert guidance, resources, and evidence-based practices.
- The [School of Special Educational Needs: Behaviour and Engagement](#) — collaborates with WA public schools to affect positive change for students and/or enhanced capacity of staff through a negotiated service plan, using a range of direct and indirect supports.

- The [School of Special Educational Needs: Medical and Mental Health](#) — provides educational support for public and non-government school students whose medical or mental health prevents them from participating in their enrolled school programs.
- The [School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory \(Vision and Hearing\)](#) — provides educational support for children and students with hearing loss, vision impairment or dual sensory loss from birth to completion of school, in both public and non-government school settings.

Supporting a Child or Young Person When Changing Schools

If a child or young person is already attending school when they enter care, the priority should be to support them to continue at their current school where possible. Maintaining this stability helps them to preserve important connections with their peers, teachers, and wider school community. For children and young people who have siblings in different care arrangements, staying at the same school can also be a way to maintain important sibling relationships.

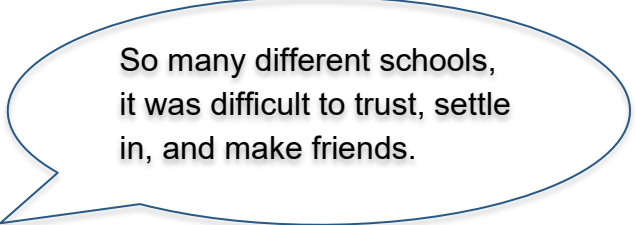
There are some circumstances in which a child or young person's care arrangement makes it necessary for them to transition to a different school. Caseworkers should work collaboratively with the child or young person, the Education Officer, and other members of the care team to explore available schooling options and identify the most appropriate choice, with consideration for their emotional wellbeing, learning needs, and cultural support requirements.



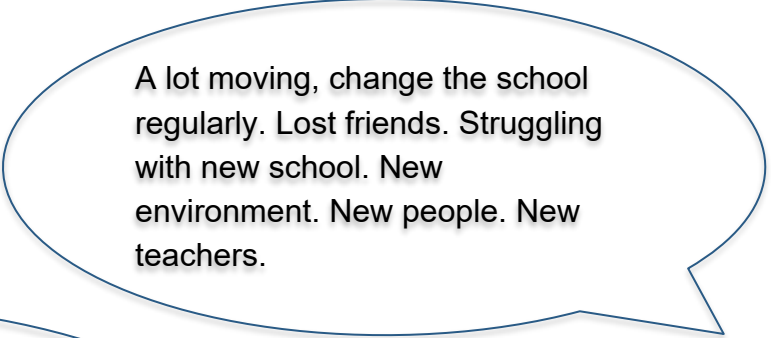
Moving to a new school is a significant change for any child or young person. It means leaving the comfort of familiar routines, trusted teachers and established friendships, and stepping into an unfamiliar environment. Changing schools often happens at the same time as other big changes, such as changes in care arrangements or the loss of important relationships, which can lead to more stress and uncertainty. For children and young people in OOHC, this experience can happen several times throughout their time in care.

Further information about supporting children and young people through periods of change at school can be found later in this document in 'Managing Transitions'.

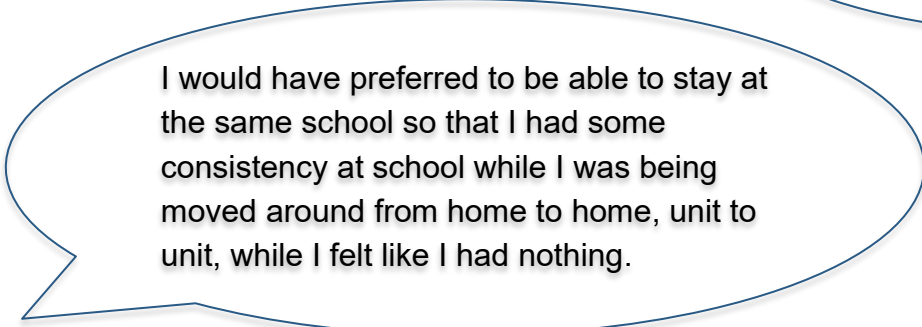
What young people say ... ¹³



So many different schools, it was difficult to trust, settle in, and make friends.



A lot moving, change the school regularly. Lost friends. Struggling with new school. New environment. New people. New teachers.



I would have preferred to be able to stay at the same school so that I had some consistency at school while I was being moved around from home to home, unit to unit, while I felt like I had nothing.

The care team can ease this transition by offering reassurance, maintaining predictable routines and helping the child or young person understand what to expect in their new school. Supporting connections with important people from their previous school can also provide valuable emotional support during this time.

Establishing clear channels of communication and sharing relevant information with key support staff at the new school will ensure that school-based supports are available when a child or young person commences. An in-person meeting is usually requested by the school and/or the Communities caseworker or Education Officer prior to school commencement. Further information about the education planning process for new school enrolments can be found [here](#).

¹³ [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](#)

When students transfer between government schools in Western Australia, their records, including attendance, academic progress and behavioural information, are made available to the new school when the student commences. To support the transition, the transferring school may share additional information including documented plans. If the student is linked to School Psychology Services, their file will also be transferred to their new school.

Tutoring

Children and young people in OOHC and/or members of the care team can seek to access tutoring support if it is determined that it will benefit learning and wellbeing. All tutoring arrangements must be endorsed by the Communities Education Officer and approved by the District Team Leader and the District Director.



Tutoring for children and young people in OOHC is intended to be short term, targeted, and designed to build confidence, strengthen engagement in education, and support academic progress. When considering tutoring, the Education Officer will consider factors such as the child or young person's academic goals, their willingness to participate, the availability of suitable tutors and whether the arrangement and schedule can be supported and maintained.

In many cases, it is preferable for the child or young person to access specialist support within their existing school program, with staff who are familiar with their learning needs. Decisions about tutoring are made on a case-by-case basis and guided by the child or young person's best interests.

Non-academic tutoring for children and young people who have a special skill, talent or interest (such as in music, arts or sports) can also be considered by the Education Officer, particularly when it supports their overall educational engagement and outcomes.

All tutoring arrangements must be recorded in the child or young person's care plan. Tutors who provide coaching or private tuition must be contracted to Communities, hold a current Working with Children Check, and complete the Communities screening check.

Further information about tutoring can be found in the Education Planning section of the [Child Protection Guide](#).

Financial Supports for Education Expenses

A fortnightly subsidy is paid to carers for children and young people in approved care arrangements to help cover everyday living costs, including incidental education, leisure and hobby expenses.

Communities is responsible for covering the costs for:

- uniforms, including mandatory hats and accessories
- books, stationery and other required study materials
- standard fees, including voluntary fees and contributions, and
- school excursions, incursions and other activities, including swimming lessons.

If the child or young person is in a care arrangement provided by a Community Sector Organisation (CSO) or ACCO, education-related costs are generally met by the agency through Care Arrangement Support Cost funding. To learn more about how to manage reimbursement and to cover costs related to a child or young person's education, refer to the Child Protection Guide - section D.20 [Financial support for a child in care](#).

The resource [Who pays in WA?](#) provides guidance on payments and financial supports available to Community Foster and Family Carers in WA, including how these supports can be accessed. The resource also outlines where to find further information about financial assistance and related decision-making processes.

In addition to the financial support that Communities provides for students in OOHC, other payments or supports for Western Australian students include:

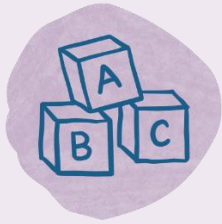
- [KidSport](#) — financial assistance of up to \$300 per financial year, to enable eligible WA children aged 5–18 years to participate in community sport.
- [Free public transport](#) — Monday to Friday through the Ride to School Free Program for students who hold a valid Student Smart Rider card.

- [Youth Allowance for students and apprentices](#) from the age of 16, including eligibility for [young people in OOHC](#).
- [ABSTUDY](#) — financial help for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students or apprentices.
- [The WA Student Assistance Payment](#) — providing financial support to families in Western Australia with school-aged children (Kindergarten to Year 12) to contribute to school expenses. Carers can apply for the WASAP payment through their Service WA app which is available to download on the [Apple App Store](#) and [Google Play Store](#).
- [TILA](#) (Transition to Independent Living Allowance) — a one-off payment of up to \$1500 for young people aged 15 – 25 years who are leaving or have left OOHC and are transitioning to independent living. TILA can be used to pay for a range of goods and supports, including education-related costs such as course fees, books, computer equipment, uniforms etc. The Communities caseworker will apply for TILA on the young person's behalf and support the management of payments in line with their leaving care plan.

Supporting Education and Learning: From Birth to Early Adulthood



Early Education and Care (Birth to Kindergarten)



This section provides information on:

- Learning and education in the early years
- Supporting early learning and development at home
- Programs in the community
- Early childhood education and care services
- Kindergarten
- Programs and services for Aboriginal children and families
- Supports for children with disabilities and/or additional needs

Learning and education in the early years

The first five years of life are critical for brain development and provide the foundation for future learning, wellbeing, and development. During this period children learn through relationships, play, everyday experiences, and participation in family and community life.

Strong, nurturing relationships with caregivers and other significant adults help children develop a sense of safety, belonging, and confidence. Everyday experiences such as reading, talking, singing, playing, and participating in daily routines support children's language development, social and emotional skills, curiosity, problem-solving abilities, and physical development. Together, these experiences support children's overall development and help prepare them for learning and a successful transition to school.

Children in OOHC may have experienced trauma, disruption, grief, and loss, which can affect their development, wellbeing, and learning. Early experiences of adversity can impact speech and language development, emotional regulation, social skills, and cognitive development. Positive, supportive, and consistent experiences at home and in early learning environments are therefore particularly important in helping children to heal and grow.

Concerns about a child's learning, development and/or wellbeing should be identified and addressed as early as possible through discussion with the Communities caseworker.

Early support can have a significant impact on a child's development and help them transition more successfully into school. Planning processes for young children in OOHC should include consideration of developmental milestones, learning needs, and any supports or assessments that may be required.

The [Early Years Learning Framework for Australia](#) provides guidance for educators and early childhood services in supporting children's learning and development from birth to school age. Trauma-aware information about building strong foundations in the early years can be found through [Early Years Education and Care](#) and the Department of Education's [Before school](#) resources.



Supporting early learning and development at home

Play is one of the most important ways young children learn. Activities such as reading, playing games, being physically active, singing songs, and helping with household tasks support children's learning, development, and wellbeing.

Many websites provide activities and resources to support children's learning and development, including [Preschoolers play & learning](#) on the Raising Children Network, [Play-based learning](#) from the Department of Education, and [Playgroup WA](#).

The Department of Education's [Programs for parents](#) details free seminars available to parents and carers of young children in WA. For information about services for Aboriginal children, refer to the section titled Programs and Services for Aboriginal Children and Families.

Play-based activities that support learning at home:



Programs in the community

Attending children's programs and activities in the local community can help to enrich early learning and development. Libraries, playgroups, community events, recreation centres, museums, cultural centres, nature-based activities, and family outings can all provide

valuable opportunities for children to learn, explore, connect with others, and maintain connections to culture, language and community.



A range of community-based programs are also available to support families and other caregivers of young children. These include:

- Children's programs run by local councils (e.g. Rhyme Time, Story Time), with some councils providing sessions for Aboriginal and CaLD children.
- Informal or formal [playgroups](#) for families and carers with young children, including dedicated playgroups for [Aboriginal children](#), CaLD families, children with disability or developmental concerns, and LGBTQIA+ parents and caregivers.
- [HIPPY](#) (Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters) — a fun, free, home-based early learning and parenting program offered by several community organisations across WA. The program helps to build the skills and confidence needed to support children's learning at home and can link families to community support.
- [Early reading and literacy resources](#) offered online and 'in person' by the State Library of Western Australia

- Programs for parents, such as [Parenting Connection WA](#), [Ngala](#), [Southwest Metropolitan Parenting Service](#), [Triple P programs](#).
- [Child Health appointments](#) providing free healthcare and developmental screening for children from birth to school age.
- [Child and Parent Centres WA](#) offering programs, services, and support for families of children aged birth to eight years.

Early childhood education and care services

ECEC is the umbrella term for [early learning and care services](#), which include:

- **Day care or long day care** - provided in a centre-based setting, for children from infancy to school age.
- **Family day care** - provided in an approved educator's home.
- **Pre-kindergarten programs** – early learning programs supporting school readiness, often delivered in schools or community centres.
- **Kindergarten** - program for young children delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher in a school, community kindergarten, or childcare service.
- **Occasional day care** - centre-based care for families who need someone to look after their children on a casual basis.
- **Outside school hours care (OSHC)** - centre-based childcare for primary school-age children before or after school, on student-free days and during the school holidays.
- **In Home Care (IHC)** - a flexible form of care in the child or carer's home, operating under strict eligibility criteria and with limited availability.

Young children in OOHC attend ECEC services for a range of reasons, including to support their learning and development, strengthen cultural connections, and/or assist carers to meet other responsibilities such as employment, study or caregiving commitments.

Decisions about the use of ECEC should be made during care and education planning processes, considering the child's best interests, the needs of both the child and carer, the contribution ECEC can make to placement stability, and the suitability of available services. The [Child Care Attendance](#) section of the Child Protection Guide should be considered when making these decisions.

High-quality ECEC can provide children with stability, routine, and opportunities for learning, while supporting developmental outcomes and school readiness. It is important to recognise, however, that ECEC is not always the best option for every child. Where services are inconsistent, unreliable, or unable to meet a child's individual needs, attendance may contribute to stress or anxiety and negatively affect their wellbeing.

Decisions about the type, quality and frequency of ECEC attendance should reflect each child's individual needs. Some children in OOHC may benefit from the consistency, routine and learning opportunities provided by regular attendance at a high-quality service, while others may require fewer hours to minimise transitions, accommodate family contact or appointments, or strengthen relationships with important adults, particularly during periods of adjustment. The quality of the service is an important consideration, including its ability to provide trauma-informed support, respond to additional needs, build positive relationships, and communicate effectively with carers and professionals.

Culturally responsive environments that nurture and strengthen cultural identity, particularly for Aboriginal and CaLD children, create the strongest foundations for learning and wellbeing. Where possible, Aboriginal children should be supported to attend quality Aboriginal-led ECEC services. Access to quality ECEC services can vary, particularly in regional and remote areas. In these situations, the focus should be on identifying the most suitable and stable option available for the child and carer.



The [Inclusion Support Program](#) can be accessed by ECEC providers to support children with complex needs, including those with experiences of trauma.

When a decision is made for a child to attend childcare, the child's caseworker can support carers to apply for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) and the Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS - Child Wellbeing). In most cases, this will cover the full cost of approved childcare.

Further information about the use of ECEC for children in OOHC, including guidance to support decision-making and information about childcare subsidies, can be found in Communities [Child Protection Guide](#). Additional information about [service quality ratings](#), as well as guidance on [choosing a childcare service](#) is available online.

Kindergarten

All children in WA who are 4 years old by 30 June of the school year can access 15 hours of free kindergarten per week through local schools or community kindergartens. This means some children will start kindergarten at aged four, while others may still be three when the school year begins. The Department of Education's [School Age Calculator](#) can be used to find out when a child can be enrolled in kindergarten.

Some WA public schools are trialling free [full-time kindergarten](#) programs, providing children with play-based learning five days a week, while helping to reduce childcare costs for working families.

Kindergarten offers rich, engaging experiences that support children's growth and development across all areas. Through play, creative arts, movement, storytelling, music, and social interaction, children build strong foundations in thinking, communication, and oral language. Kindergarten also fosters social and emotional development while strengthening fine and gross motor skills. These experiences lay the foundations for early literacy and numeracy and support children's readiness for school.

Whilst kindergarten is not compulsory, Communities recommends that all children in OOHC be enrolled in kindergarten to support their early learning. Where possible, enrolment should be in a school-based or community kindergarten program, as these provide a structured learning environment and can support a smoother transition to school.

Carers may submit enrolment applications for kindergarten, although approval must be obtained from the child's Communities caseworker prior to doing so and the Communities caseworker is responsible for notifying the school or provider that the child is in OOHC.

Important note: Enrolment applications are usually required by mid-year in the year prior to the start of kindergarten. Applications received after this time may not be accepted. Further, enrolment in a school-based kindergarten which is outside the local intake area, will not guarantee a place in pre-primary and beyond.

The Department of Education has developed a range of resources including [Hello Kindergarten](#), which provides guidance on starting kindergarten and what to expect. For those supporting Aboriginal children, the [Say Hello to School](#) booklet offers culturally appropriate support to help children and families prepare for this transition.

If there are concerns about how the child may adjust to kindergarten, the District Psychologist and/or Education Officer are available to provide guidance and support for their early learning needs.

Going to school every day is very important. At school, teachers plan programs and activities that build on previously learned skills and knowledge. Developing the habit of regular school attendance from kindergarten is vital, to ensure children do not miss important concepts and skills that are essential for future learning.

Programs and services for Aboriginal children and families

Communities Aboriginal Practice Leaders can provide advice and guidance on services available in the local area that support the learning and development needs of Aboriginal children in the early years. This may include ECEC programs run by ACCOs, or other learning programs that specifically cater for Aboriginal children. This should be discussed as part of Care Planning and Cultural Planning processes, with other members of the care team such as family members, Elders, caregivers and ACCOs.

Accessing services for Aboriginal children in OOHC may be more difficult in regional and remote areas due to geographical distances, service availability and limited transport options. Collaboration with ACCOs and other local service providers is important to support culturally safe community connection and outreach opportunities.

[KindiLink](#) is a free play-and-learn initiative targeted to Aboriginal children who are not yet old enough to enrol in school, offered through many public schools across Western Australia. Children attend with a parent, carer or family member for up to six hours per week to participate in high-quality play-and-learn sessions led by a teacher and an Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer.

The [Parents and Learning](#) (PaL) program is a home-based parent engagement program that supports Aboriginal families in getting their children, aged 3 - 5 years ready for school, with a particular focus on early literacy skills.

Supports for children with disabilities and/or additional needs

Keeping track of a child's growth, learning, and communication skills helps identify any concerns early so they can receive the support they need as soon as possible. [Child Health appointments](#) provide an opportunity to monitor young children's development and discuss any concerns about a child's progress. The [Aboriginal Health team](#) coordinates appointments for Aboriginal children and uses culturally responsive screening tools to assess their development and wellbeing.

The [Developmental Milestones](#) guide is a useful tool for understanding typical early childhood development at various stages. It can help caregivers observe children's play, learning and wellbeing, recognise strengths, and identify areas where additional support or early intervention may be beneficial.

A range of programs and services are available to support young children with disability or developmental delay. Carers and other members of the care team are encouraged to discuss available options with the child's caseworker to identify the supports most suited to the child's individual needs.

The Kids Research Institute Australia [Inklings Program](#) supports babies aged 6-18 months who are showing early differences in social interaction that may indicate a higher likelihood of developmental differences, including autism.

Children aged 8 and under with developmental delay and/or autism, and their families, may be able to access supports to enhance their development and participation. These supports may include information and advice, connections to local services, targeted developmental supports, short-term intervention, parenting and family support, and assistance to access longer-term disability supports where required. Early childhood support arrangements are changing nationally, with the progressive introduction of [Thriving Kids](#) from October 2026. Current information or advice should be sought to determine eligibility criteria, available supports and access pathways.

[The WA Inclusion Agency](#) supports the inclusion of children with disability in ECEC settings by working with services to build inclusive practices and access appropriate supports and resources.

[Transitions for children and young people with disabilities guide](#) provides evidence-based guidance to support children with disability or developmental delay as they transition to school.

[Autism WA](#) provides specialist autism services for individuals and families, including supports for young children.

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) have produced a helpful [toolkit](#) that supports families and carers to advocate for their child with disability in the early years.

[Language Development Centres](#) (LDCs) provide specialist early intervention for students with a primary diagnosis of a developmental language disorder, and support students from Kindergarten to Year 2. Referrals are made through a speech pathologist in consultation with the child's school and care team.

[NOFASD](#) provides information and resources for families and caregivers of children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), including guidance on educational supports and [culturally safe resources](#) for Aboriginal families and communities.

Primary School (Ages 5 – 12 years)



This section provides information on:

- Preparing a child for primary school
- Enrolling in primary school
- Supports for Aboriginal children and families
- Supports for children with disabilities and/or additional needs

The first years of school are an exciting and engaging time for children. For those in OOHC, early school experiences can play a particularly important role in fostering stability, trust, and a sense of belonging. When primary schools adopt an inclusive, trauma-informed approach and provide safe, predictable, and caring environments, they can offer the consistency and connection that are important for children's wellbeing and long-term engagement in learning. Strong, trusting relationships with teachers, peers and the wider school community help children develop social skills, build emotional regulation, and engage positively in learning. With these supports in place, children are better positioned to succeed at school, while developing the confidence, resilience and capacity to overcome challenges.

Preparing a child for primary school

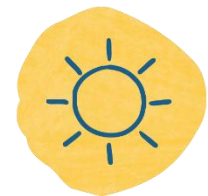
Starting full-time schooling in pre-primary is a big step for children and there are many practical and emotional ways that caregivers can [prepare them](#) for this transition.

The Department of Education in WA provides helpful [resources](#) for families, offering guidance and information about what to expect when children start pre-primary.



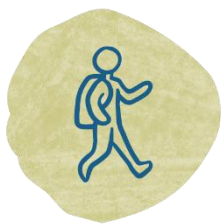
Preparing in the year and months before starting primary school

- Have regular conversations about starting primary school and encourage the child to share how they are feeling about the transition.
- Make sure health and dental check-ups are up to date, and that all recommended immunisations have been completed.
- Visit the school and attend information sessions, orientation days, or transition activities to help your child become familiar with the environment.
- Talk with the child's Kindergarten teacher about ways you can support their learning and development at home.



During the summer holidays

- Show the child where the school is located and talk about how they will travel to and from school each day.
- Be positive and enthusiastic about starting school to help build confidence and excitement.
- Try on school uniforms and practise routines they will need for school, such as packing their bag, putting on their hat, and organising their belongings.
- Arrange playdates with other children who will be attending the school, if possible, before the school year begins.
- Talk about school expectations and routines, including any important rules and what a typical school day might look like.



The first day of school

- Make sure the child knows who will take them to school and who will pick them up on the first day.
- Help the child organise their clothes, hat, shoes and socks the night before.
- Show the child where you will meet them at the end of the school day.
- At the end of the day, take time to talk with the child about their first day at school and what they enjoyed.

Enrolling in primary school

All children of compulsory school age must be enrolled in school and supported to attend every day, beginning with pre-primary for children who turn five on or before 30 June of that year.¹⁴

If a child is enrolled in a school and attending regularly when they enter care, Communities will support them to remain at that school wherever possible. However, if a child needs to change schools, they will usually be enrolled in the primary school closest to their new address. Most government primary schools restrict enrolments to students who live within their [local-intake area](#). Information about local intake areas and school locations is available on [Schools Online: Department of Education WA](#).

While school enrolment decisions involve the broader care team, the child's Communities caseworker is responsible for leading and completing the enrolment process. The Communities caseworker will also inform the school that the child is in OOHC and share relevant information to support planning for their learning and wellbeing.

It's important to actively support the child's voice during the education planning process, with their interests, preferences and emerging views used to inform decisions about their learning, both at school and outside school hours.

While most children in OOHC attend public primary schools, enrolment in a non-government school may be considered by the Education Officer and other members of the care team in certain circumstances. For example, a non-government school, such as a Catholic or Independent school, may be considered best placed to meet a child's educational and wellbeing needs by offering faith-based or values-driven education, or learning approaches that align with the child's needs, strengths and preferred learning

¹⁴ [Enrol at a Western Australian school - Department of Education](#)

style. All enrolments in non-government schools require approval from the District Director. Further information and support regarding non-government school enrolments can be found [here](#).

Supports for Aboriginal children and families

Many primary schools offer programs that support Aboriginal children's cultural identity, confidence, school engagement, and attendance. These may include school readiness initiatives, mentoring programs, and community-led activities delivered on school sites.

Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers play an important role in this support. They act as a key link between schools, families, and communities, and help students navigate any issues that may arise with teachers or peers. In some schools, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers work in partnership with ACCOs to deliver programs that support children's engagement, attendance, and wellbeing.

Building direct relationships with Aboriginal staff and other staff responsible for student wellbeing can help maintain open communication, strengthen collaboration, and ensure a culturally informed approach to supporting Aboriginal children.

Aboriginal Practice Leaders and Education Officers can provide further information about available programs and local initiatives that support Aboriginal children and families.

Supports for children with disabilities and/or additional needs

As children begin primary school, additional learning needs may become more apparent, as structured learning environments and increasing academic expectations can highlight learning challenges. Members of the care team should maintain open communication with Communities caseworkers and school staff and raise any concerns about how a child is coping at school so that appropriate support can be identified early. Early intervention can make a significant difference, and children who receive support early often require less assistance as they grow older.



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¹⁵Source: [Advocating with and for your child: Primary School](#)

The Raising Children Network's [School-age development](#) provides useful information about typical development in the primary school years, practical support strategies as well as guidance about when it may be appropriate to seek further advice or support.

As required, the Communities caseworker will make referrals for further assessment or arrange specialist support which may include services such as occupational therapy, speech therapy, behavioural support, or psychological services. Schools often accommodate the delivery of specialist services on-site, through negotiated arrangements. This allows students to receive support during school hours, minimising disruption and providing convenience for parents, caregivers, and Communities staff.

As outlined in Section 2, schools receive additional funding to support students with diagnosed disabilities, which can be used in a variety of ways to meet a child's learning needs in primary school. Where this applies, the child's Communities caseworker will ensure that all relevant documentation is provided to the school to ensure funding and appropriate supports are maintained.



Resources

The following resources may be helpful for those supporting children with disability and/or additional needs:

- [Guide for parents of children with developmental delay of disability](#) helps families understand the education options available for children with developmental delay or disability.
- [Advocating With and For Your Child: Primary School](#) assists caregivers of primary school children with disability to identify and plan reasonable adjustments that support their child's full participation in school life.
- [Our right to learn and play](#) supports Aboriginal school students with disability and their families. The resource offers practical tips and information about the rights of students with disability under the Disability Standards for Education 2005.¹⁶

Secondary School (Ages 12 – 18 years)



This section provides information on:

- Preparing for secondary school
- Enrolling in secondary school
- Supporting learning at secondary school
- Years 7 – 10
- Years 11 and 12
- Supporting education options and career pathways
- Alternatives to Year 11 and 12
- Supports for Aboriginal young people in secondary school
- Supports for young people with disability and/or additional needs

Preparing for secondary school

Moving from primary to secondary school is a major milestone for any young person. It is a time filled with exciting changes in learning, development, and daily routines. The secondary school environment can create additional pressures and challenges for some young people as they adapt to moving between classes and teachers throughout the day, each with different teaching styles and expectations. Members of a young person's care team can all play a part in helping young people [prepare for secondary school](#) and feel confident about this next step.

Most secondary schools host information evenings in the latter part of Year 6 to share information about the transition process and what to expect. These events are usually promoted through the young person's primary school. In addition, many schools offer transition or orientation days in Year 6, giving students a chance to explore and familiarise themselves with the secondary school environment, staff, and other students. These opportunities – combined with support from the care team, can make the move to secondary school a positive and reassuring experience.

For young people who experience anxiety or need extra support for any reason, additional transition visits can often be arranged to help them feel more comfortable. In these cases, it is important to communicate with both the primary and secondary school so they can organise a plan that best supports their needs.



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Enrolling in secondary school

Western Australian secondary schools cater for students in Years 7 to 12, typically aged 12 to 18 years. During this time, it is a legal requirement for young people to stay involved in school, training, or another approved learning pathway. This helps ensure they continue building the skills, confidence, and opportunities they need for their future.

By Year 5, the student's secondary schooling options should be discussed as part of the care planning process. These discussions should incorporate the young person's voice, including their preferences, needs, and aspirations, alongside consideration of the available secondary education options. For Aboriginal young people, it is important to

¹⁷ Source: [Milestone and Transitions](#)

prioritise cultural connections and connections to Country, and to seek advice from the Aboriginal Practice Leader, Elders, and community members to ensure culturally safe decision-making. For young people from CaLD backgrounds, consideration should also be given to maintaining connections with language, culture, faith and community where these are important to the young person.

While most young people in OOHC attend their local government secondary school, non-government school pathways will occasionally be considered when these offer a better fit for the young person's learning and wellbeing needs. Enrolment in a private school requires consultation with Education Officers and formal approval must be provided via the Communities District Director. Where private school enrolment is being considered, available scholarships, bursaries, or other fee assistance programs offered by the school should also be explored to help support affordability and access.

Boarding school is occasionally considered for regional and remote young people in OOHC as a secondary schooling option, particularly where it supports educational continuity and access to opportunities that may not be available locally. Scholarships and other financial assistance may assist in making this option accessible. Any decision to pursue a boarding school placement must also be approved by the District Director.

If a young person has a particular interest or talent and is considering a specialist program — such as in performing arts, sport, or academic extension, the Communities caseworker is responsible for exploring available options and opportunities with the Communities Education Officer.

There are more than 100 [Approved Specialist Programs](#) at 55 schools across Western Australia. Several public schools also offer [Gifted and Talented](#) programs for students, providing extension opportunities in academics, arts and languages. It is essential to explore these options early and submit applications for specialist programs on time, as many schools include try-outs, interviews, and other activities as part of their selection process.

Secondary school enrolment documents should be completed in the year prior to commencement, while the student is in Year 6. Information and guidance about this process will be provided by the primary school. Required documents usually include the most recent school reports, an up-to-date immunisation record, and a copy of the birth certificate. Carers may submit enrolment forms following consultation with the young person's Communities caseworker; however, responsibility for notifying the school of the young person's care status remains with the Communities caseworker.

Key information to gather when speaking to the school:

- Identify the educational programs offered.
- Identify the school's values and philosophies around teaching and learning, along with its approach to supporting positive behaviour.
- If relevant, find out what supports or programs are available for Aboriginal and CaLD children and young people.
- Find out how the school supports children with additional needs and students with experiences of trauma.
- Confirm school fees and any other costs involved for specific programs or option classes.
- Ensure all required documents are made available to complete the enrolment process. Typically, this includes a birth certificate, health and immunisation records, carer details, legal status regarding the child and any relevant court orders.

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Before or shortly after enrolment, the Communities caseworker may arrange a meeting with the school's student services team, which members of the care team may be asked to attend. This can be an opportunity to build positive connections with school staff and share information that helps them understand the young person's needs, including any cultural, linguistic, or faith-related considerations. It can also support effective planning for the young person's learning and wellbeing by considering their strengths, interests, and any challenges, so the school is ready to help them feel safe, settled, and engaged in learning.

Further information can be found in the Education Planning section of Communities [Child Protection Guide](#), as well as the Department of Education's website about [enrolment in public schools](#).

Supporting learning at secondary school

Members of a young person's care team can play an important role in supporting the secondary education of young people in OOH. Being involved and staying interested in their learning, will often improve motivation, attendance, and achievement at high school. Although many young people are developing more independence at this age (and may not want families, carers, or members of the care team to be around at their secondary school), they will benefit from ongoing support and encouragement outside of school.

¹⁸ Adapted from: [Milestone and Transitions](#)

Young people should be encouraged to use a weekly planner or diary to help them to organise their time. This may include a list of school and extra-curricular activities, along with the equipment they need for each activity. Discussing this will help them to feel prepared and confident about what to expect each day. If possible, young people should have access to a quiet space in the home where it is comfortable for them to study and do homework. Taking time each day to talk about what needs to be completed can help them stay focused and organised.

Life Without Barriers has developed a [practice tool](#) to support young people in OOHC in managing their learning time, with information for carers and care teams on how create the right conditions for homework and study.

The transition to high school can be further supported by promoting healthy daily routines, including balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, limited screen time, and adequate sleep. It is also important to ensure the young person knows who they can turn to for support at school, such as trusted teachers, the year coordinator, the Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer, multicultural support staff (where available) or other student support staff.

Positive relationships with teachers play an important role in supporting successful engagement in secondary school. An effective way to foster these relationships is by encouraging young people to ask their teacher questions when they are unsure or need support. This will help the student feel confident, connected, and understood.

Members of the young person's care team can also strengthen these relationships by modelling respect and speaking positively about teachers, which helps build trust and reinforces the value of working together.

Adjusting to high school can take time. If challenges persist beyond the first term, it is important to raise any concerns with the young person's Communities caseworker. This may be an appropriate time to arrange a meeting with school staff to discuss the situation and work together on practical support strategies.



What young people say ...¹⁹

I was fortunate to study at a high school that supported me and created a stable environment for me to rely on.

The support and advice I received from direct care staff (from my long-term family group home placement) has stayed with me throughout my adult life. They taught me that knowledge is power and always pushed me to be my best.

¹⁹ [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](#)

Years 7 to 10

Teaching and learning for students in Years 7 to 10 is guided by the WA curriculum. Information about the course content and the guiding principles for teaching, learning and assessment for each year can be found on the [School Curriculum and Standards Authority](#) website.

Alongside their compulsory subjects, many secondary schools give Year 7 and 8 students the chance to try a wide variety of option classes — such as woodwork, cooking, digital technologies, and textiles. When students reach Year 9 and 10, they choose the option subjects that best reflect their strengths and interests, supporting meaningful learning experiences.

This presents a valuable opportunity to begin meaningful conversations, understand the young person's interests and strengths and explore future training and education pathways. These conversations align with the first phase of Communities' [leaving care planning](#) which begins at age 15 and focuses on identifying longer-term goals and aspirations.

Many schools offer the [Year 9 Career Taster Program](#) giving students the chance to explore their aspirations and gain a taste of the world of work through practical industry experiences. The program is supported by an online [Career Taster Portal](#) making it easy to browse events, activities, resources, and career information.



During Year 10, students are guided by school staff to select the courses and pathways that they wish to pursue in Years 11 and 12. Each year, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority release an [information handbook](#) to help Year 10 students and the people who support them, to make informed decisions about these selections. It is designed to help young people explore options that reflect their interests, learning needs and future career aspirations.

Years 11 and 12

There are many options available to students in Years 11 and 12, each offering different pathways into university, training, or employment. The right choice depends on the young person's interests, strengths, and future goals.

The summary below provides an overview of study options available to senior secondary students in Western Australia.²⁰

Option	Description
ATAR courses	Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) courses typically have an academic focus. Students seeking to achieve an ATAR need to complete a minimum of four Year 12 ATAR courses. Although usually undertaken to access university studies, ATAR courses are also excellent preparation for a range of post-school pathways, including vocational training.
General courses	These courses are primarily intended for students who are typically aiming to enter further vocational training or to enter the workforce after they leave school. General courses don't have externally set exams like ATAR courses, but they do have a compulsory externally set task in Year 12 worth 15 per cent of a student's overall assessment. Students may be able to use some general courses as part of an alternative entry pathway to some university courses.

²⁰ Adapted from [Making choices for Years 11 and 12 - Department of Education](#)

Option	Description
Foundation courses	Designed for students who need support to achieve the minimum standards for literacy and/or numeracy before the end of Year 12. These courses provide a focus on functional literacy and numeracy skills, practical work-related experience and the opportunity to build personal skills that are important for life and work. Foundation courses don't have exams. They have a compulsory externally set task in Year 12 which is worth 15 per cent of a student's school-based assessment for the course.
VET qualifications	Students complete a nationally recognised vocational education and training (VET) qualification. VET builds skills and knowledge in and for the workplace. Students may use VET qualifications to count towards the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE).
Endorsed program	Endorsed programs offer learning through activities not covered by WACE courses or VET programs. Endorsed programs are for students wishing to participate in programs which are delivered in a variety of settings by schools, workplaces, universities and community organisations. Endorsed programs can be delivered as part of the school curriculum or as extra-curricula activities and students may use them to count towards the WACE.
Preliminary courses	Preliminary courses are designed for students who have been identified as having a learning difficulty and/or an intellectual disability. These courses provide options for students who cannot access the ATAR, general or foundation

Option	Description
	<p>course content with adjustment and/or disability provisions.</p> <p>Preliminary units do not contribute to achievement of a WACE.</p>

The [Western Australian Certificate of Education](#) (WACE) is a nationally recognised senior certificate awarded to students who have successfully completed two years of senior secondary schooling and have achieved the required standard.

The WACE is recognised by universities, industry, and other training providers, and can be achieved through various combinations of courses and study options. To qualify, students must meet minimum standards in literacy and numeracy and demonstrate their learning across different subject areas.

All students completing Year 12 receive a Western Australian Statement of Student Achievement (WASSA). The WASSA formally records a student's achievement in every course, qualification and program completed in senior secondary schooling.

Year 12 students who plan to pursue further education or training after finishing school need to be aware of the key dates and deadlines for universities, industry programs, and training providers. School staff will support and guide students through this process.

For further information about Year 11 and 12 education options and alternative pathways to further study, training, or employment visit the following websites:

- [Pathways to university](#), such as Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR), using Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualifications to meet university requirements, pathways for Aboriginal students and university preparation courses.
- [Vocational education and training programs for Western Australian secondary school students](#) (VETDSS).

Supporting education options and career pathways

Encouraging young people in OOHC to complete Year 12, attain their WACE, and pursue further education, whether at university, TAFE, or through a trade, broadens their career options and significantly improves their long-term life opportunities. Young people in OOHC may benefit from additional encouragement and support to recognise their strengths, build confidence in their abilities, and believe that further education and training are achievable goals. For some young people from CaLD backgrounds, this may include support to navigate unfamiliar education systems, pathways, and post-school opportunities.

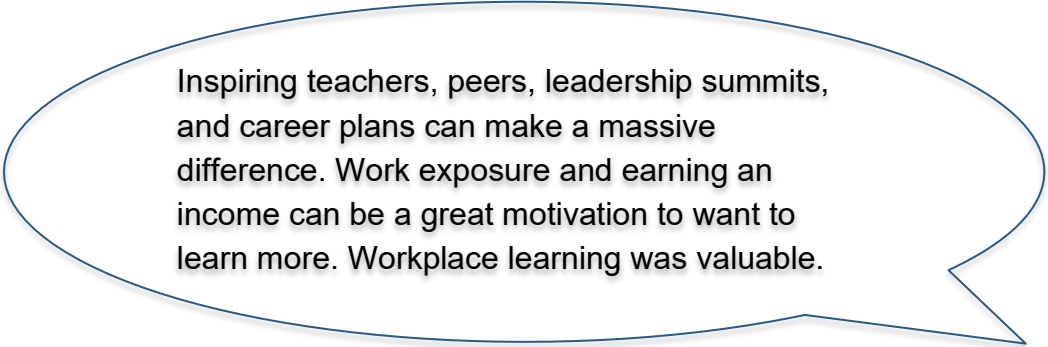
Regular discussion with members of the care team, the Communities caseworker and the Education Officer, including during annual care and leaving care planning, will ensure everyone remains aligned with and supportive of the young person's goals. It is also important to remain flexible, as a young person's goals and interests may naturally change over time.

The Department of Education hosts free [Career Conversations events](#) (in-person and online) throughout the year for young people and their caregivers to learn about post-school options and to support their understanding of the many learning, work and life opportunities available to them. These are great opportunities for young people to learn about future work trends, what employers and industry are looking for, and the pathways available to reach their career goals.

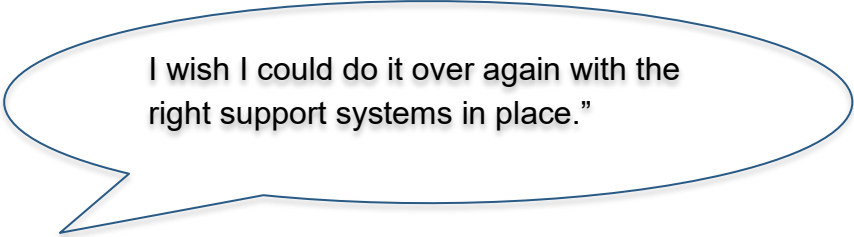
Career planning is a helpful way for young people to explore their options and consider the training, jobs and future pathways that interest them. While career planning often takes place in schools, there are also many online resources available to support [members of the care team](#) and [students](#) in having these discussions at home.

[My Future](#) is a youth-friendly resource that supports young people to explore career pathways and develop self-knowledge to guide career decision-making.



What young people say ...²¹

Inspiring teachers, peers, leadership summits, and career plans can make a massive difference. Work exposure and earning an income can be a great motivation to want to learn more. Workplace learning was valuable.



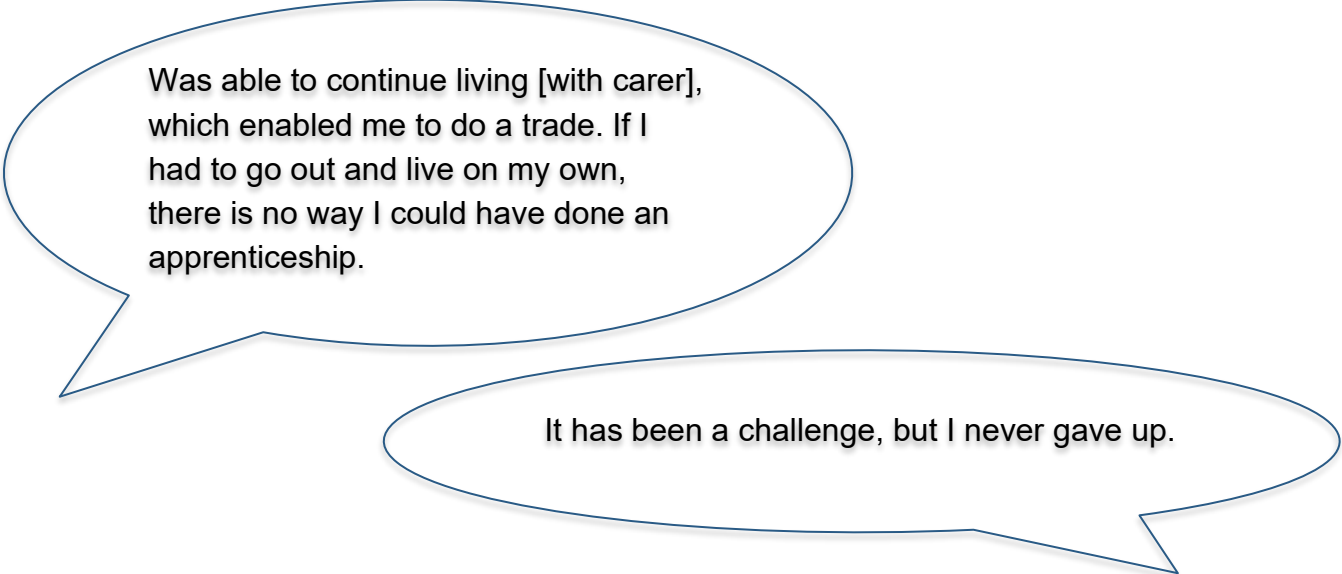
I wish I could do it over again with the right support systems in place.”

Aboriginal Practice Leaders, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers and ACCO staff can play an important role in ensuring Aboriginal young people are supported to explore and pursue education and training opportunities that align with their cultural identity, strengths, and aspirations.

Further information about programs and services that provide support and encourage further education for Aboriginal students in secondary school can be found in the ‘Supports for Aboriginal young people in secondary school’ section of this guide.

Many young people in OOHC turn 18 during their final year of compulsory schooling and may exit care at or before this time. Where possible, maintaining stability in their current care arrangement should be prioritised to support their success in this important final year of schooling. Leaving care planning should include discussion of continued supports, such as assistance up to age 21 in the current care arrangement through a [Staying On Agreement](#) via [Home Stretch WA](#), with further options outlined in the ‘Beyond School’ section of this guide.

²¹ [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](#)

What young people say ...²²

Was able to continue living [with carer], which enabled me to do a trade. If I had to go out and live on my own, there is no way I could have done an apprenticeship.

It has been a challenge, but I never gave up.

Alternatives to Year 11 and 12

While young people are encouraged to complete Year 11 and 12, it may not work for everyone. It can be hard for some young people to make an informed decision about what they want to do, whether it's staying at school, starting a Vocational Education and Training (VET) course, or leaving school to look for work.

If a young person is considering leaving school before completing compulsory education, it is important to have an open and respectful conversation to understand their reasons and concerns. Helping young people to understand their options before they make a final decision can make a big difference. Encourage young people to discuss their future goals with the school's careers coordinator, a teacher they feel comfortable with, the school's Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer, a trusted Elder or other culturally relevant support people.

Information about alternative education and training pathways available at this stage can be provided by the Communities Education Officer, including options such as:

Apprenticeships and traineeships:

An apprenticeship involves full-time or part-time work with an employer who provides an opportunity to gain experience in all aspects of a trade. This is a structured program with a combination of on the job and off the job training at a TAFE college or another approved registered training organisation (RTO).

Traineeships can be completed on a full-time or part-time basis and typically involve employment-based training over approximately 12 months. Apprenticeships generally last longer, usually between three and four years.

²² [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](#)



[Pre-apprenticeships and pre-traineeships](#) combine training and workplace experience to prepare people for apprenticeships, traineeships or employment. More information about apprenticeships and traineeships is available from the [Department of Training and Workforce Development's Apprenticeship Office](#) and the Department of Education [website](#). Information about culturally appropriate training, employment and career support services for Aboriginal young people can be found [here](#).

Accredited training:

Training programs leading to accredited qualifications are available through RTOs, which are required to comply with guidelines relating to training delivery, assessment, and student welfare. Find out more from the Department of Training and Workforce Development about [accredited training in WA](#).

Combination of school, training or employment:

In some circumstances, a combination of approved options may be permitted including school, training, or employment, with a combination being equivalent to full-time schooling. If the combination involves employment, the employer becomes part of the approved arrangement.

If, after discussion and consultation with the broader care team, the young person decides to leave school during the final two years of their compulsory education (Years 11 & 12), a [Notice of Arrangements \(NOA\)](#) is required by the Department of Education. The NOA is an approval process for young people to participate in an alternative to full-time schooling, such as approved education, training, or employment, or a combination of these activities. The NOA must be signed off by the Communities caseworker and submitted to the Department of Education's Participation Unit.

If a young person becomes disengaged from school and is not participating in an approved alternative arrangement, their school may refer them to the Department of Education's Engagement and Transitions Team.

A Participation Coordinator (PC) from this team will be allocated, to provide face-to-face outreach support and help re-engage the young person in suitable education, training, or employment pathways. PCs work closely with a range of support agencies and services, coordinating placements for young people who face multiple barriers to participation. They continue to provide support until the young person turns 18.

Supports for Aboriginal young people in secondary school



Supporting Aboriginal young people in OOHC to navigate secondary school begins with creating strong, culturally safe foundations where young people's voices and opinions are heard. Members of the young person's care team play a vital role in this journey, and it is important to work closely with Aboriginal Practice Leaders, ACCOs, local community members and Elders to ensure cultural identity is recognised, nurtured, and celebrated.

Building meaningful cultural connections, including through culturally safe and responsive school environments that support the young person's connection to Country where possible, can strengthen a young person's sense of self and their engagement and wellbeing at school. Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers can help foster belonging within the school environment, encourage participation in programs that strengthen cultural identity, and guide young people towards school-based and community opportunities that deepen cultural connections.

The programs listed below support cultural connection, school engagement and future pathways and opportunities for Aboriginal secondary students in WA.

For specific guidance about local options, members of a young person's care team should consult with the Communities Education Officer, Aboriginal Practice Leader, or the school's Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer.

- [Follow the Dream | Polly Farmer Foundation](#) provides tailored after-school tuition and individualised mentoring support.
- The [Stars Foundation](#) provides a holistic mentoring program that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and young women to identify their goals and reach their full potential.
- [Deadly Sista Girlz - Waalitj Foundation](#) is a culturally safe program designed to improve school attendance and education attainment amongst First Nations girls. The program is led by role models who empower participants to make informed decisions about their health, education, and future careers.
- [The Clontarf Foundation](#) supports young boys to stay engaged in school, complete Year 12, and transition into employment by fostering strong relationships, a positive environment, and a wide range of activities that build confidence, self-esteem, and life skills.
- [Shooting Stars | Empowering Aboriginal girls](#) offers advocacy, support, opportunities and the tools and resources to empower young Aboriginal women to take the lead in shaping their own futures.
- The [Aboriginal School-Based Training program](#) offers students in Years 10, 11 and 12 the opportunity to commence training qualifications. Completion contributes to Year 12 or equivalent attainment. The fact Sheet for students can be found [here](#).
- [Employment Enabling Support for Aboriginal Youth](#) (through the Waalitj Foundation) provides support for Aboriginal youth job seekers by providing funding to address

barriers to employment, e.g. payment of training and resource fees, industry tickets, driver licences and lessons, personal protective clothing and work wear.

- [Indigenous Skills and Employment Program \(ISEP\) | NIAA](#) aims to connect Aboriginal people to jobs, career advancement opportunities and to new training and job-ready activities.
- [Information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People | Your Career](#) provides information and support for Aboriginal students to assist with making informed career and pathway choices.
- [Madalah](#) is an Aboriginal led not-for-profit organisation that offers secondary and tertiary education scholarships for Aboriginal students in Western Australia.

Supports for young people with disability and/or additional needs

Secondary students with special education needs in WA can access a range of support options. The Department of Education outlines available schooling pathways and services for government schools [here](#).

Starting secondary school is a significant milestone for young people, especially for those with disability or additional needs. Schools often provide tailored strategies such as additional orientation visits, regular check-ins with support staff, buddy programs, visual timetables, and other personalised supports. For more tips and practical ideas to support young people with disability transitioning to secondary school, click [here](#).

As with primary school students, schools may be eligible to apply for additional funding to support secondary students with disability. School staff manage this process once documentation confirming the student's diagnosis has been received. The young person's Communities caseworker is responsible for ensuring this documentation is provided to the school promptly.

Most secondary schools employ Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs) who play a key role in supporting students with disabilities or special learning needs. LSC responsibilities include managing documented plans, working with teachers to help them cater for students in their class with additional needs, monitoring student progress, and working with relevant stakeholders (such as therapists, school psychologists, and caregivers).

LSCs often conduct meetings to ensure that everyone is working together to meet the needs of the young person. Carers and members of the young person's care team often participate in this process which is a good opportunity to keep informed about what is happening at school and how learning can be supported at home.

Timed assessments can be more challenging for students with a diagnosed disability, impairment, or medical condition. To ensure fairness, the School Curriculum and Standards Authority allow schools to adjust assessment conditions so students with disability have appropriate opportunity to demonstrate their learning. These adjustments may include additional working or reading time, rest breaks, support from a reader or

scribe, or separate supervision. Where appropriate, relevant school staff will arrange these supports.

[ASDAN](#) (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) is a UK curriculum which is recognised and implemented by secondary Education Support schools and mainstream schools in WA. The programs are flexible and activity based, aimed at developing personal, social and work-related skills that prepare young people for life beyond school.

Young people with disability accessing NDIS may be able to receive [School Leaver Employment Supports](#) in their final year of school until aged 22. This may include work experience, job readiness training, and support to explore different employment pathways. This program helps young people understand their work potential and prepare for the next step in their journey — whether that is a job, further training, or self-employment. It is a good idea for young people to start planning for life beyond school well before they leave, and the NDIS [Guide to employment](#) is a good place to start.

Support for young people involved with Youth Justice

Young people in OOHC who are involved in the youth justice system will be supported to stay engaged in education, whether they are on a community-based order or in youth detention. Education is a key protective factor that can reduce the risk of reoffending.

For those on community-based orders, the Communities caseworker works with the Youth Justice Officer from the Department of Justice to help the young person comply with the conditions of their order. The Communities Education Officer may also be involved in supporting the young person's re-engagement with school or vocational training.

All young people in youth detention have access to education services while in custody. Those serving a sentence, or who spend significant time in detention on remand, are assigned a Department of Education Youth Transition Coordinator (YTC) before release. The YTC helps address barriers, finds suitable options, and supports a return to education or training. Communities caseworkers retain responsibility for overall case management and work in partnership with the YTC and other stakeholders to coordinate supports before and after release.

Beyond School



This section provides information on:

- Leaving care planning and after-care support
- Home Stretch WA
- Achiever Awards
- CREATE Foundation
- Applying for further study or employment support

It is critical that young people in OOHC feel empowered and excited about their future, and that they have the right plans and supports in place to assist their transition into adulthood.

Leaving care planning and after care support

The [leaving care](#) process begins at age 15 and progresses through planning and preparation, transition, and post-care support for young people up to age 25. Planning early helps identify needs and goals, build independence, and support a safe transition to adulthood. This includes promoting stability in care, particularly in the final year of schooling through Staying On Arrangements – Home Stretch WA, supporting cultural and community connections and strengthening external supports to provide consistent support for young people when they have left care.

Peer mentoring and support programs can also strengthen continuity for young people leaving care, offering lived-experience guidance and practical support to help young people navigate post-school life and the transition from care with greater confidence.

If a young person in OOHC is disengaged from education or training at this stage, it is important for them to know that it is never too late to reconnect, and that with the right support, re-engagement is achievable. There are also many pathways and options available for those who have gaps in their schooling or who may still be building their literacy and/or numeracy skills, and Communities Education Officers can provide advice about available pathways and re-engagement options.

Many young people find it hard to imagine succeeding in study or training, especially if they have not seen people in their family or close circle take that path. Carers and other members of the care team can help young people in OOHC believe that further education and training are possible for them and give them the confidence and reassurance to pursue these avenues. Young people can be supported to look for role models they can relate to — people in their community, culture, or networks who have achieved their education or career goals.

The [First in Family](#) and [Headspace](#) websites offer valuable information on the mental health, wellbeing and social benefits of work and study, as well as practical strategies for supporting young people to engage in education, training and employment.

During the transition phase of leaving care planning, the Communities caseworker will consider the financial and practical considerations for the young person's education, training or employment. This includes costs such as course fees, textbooks, equipment and uniforms, and how these will be covered — through scholarships, fee waivers, or case support funds (refer to [D.20 Financial support for a child in care](#)). They will also identify any additional supports required, such as assistance with enrolment, transport, or study needs. Further information about leaving care planning and transitioning to adulthood is available in the [Child Protection Guide](#).

When a young person turns 18, they are entitled to access all personal information held about them, including school reports, school photographs, and other education-related records. It is important that carers, Communities caseworkers and members of the care team are mindful of the value of these materials, ensuring copies are made and securely stored, while also supporting the young person to safely retain and manage their original documents.

Home Stretch WA

[Home Stretch WA](#) provides young people leaving out-of-home care (OOHC) with the option to continue receiving support from the age of 18 until they turn 21.

The Home Stretch WA model was co-designed with young people with care experiences and has a particular focus on the needs of young Aboriginal people and their families. A key element for all eligible care leavers is one-on-one mentoring and coaching provided by a Transition Coach, focusing on providing support and financial aid in the following areas:

- Acquiring stable and safe accommodation, including the option for a young person to remain living with their carer under a 'Staying on Agreement', with the carer being paid a fortnightly subsidy.
- Encouraging the commencement or continuation of education and/or take up of training or employment opportunities.
- Identifying a circle of trusted individuals/mentors to support the young person for the long term and develop their life skills.

- Assisting the young person to access health services and cultural advocacy and to improve financial skills and capability.

The Transition Coach ensures that support is focused on building self-reliance, capacity and connection to community, culture, and Country.

All eligible young people will be informed about Home Stretch WA through leaving care planning processes at the age of 17. Communities caseworkers, or the relevant leaving care team member within the District Office, will take the lead role in ensuring young people understand and are supported to engage with the Home Stretch service, including making the referral on their behalf.

Home Stretch is a voluntary program, and young people should be supported to make an informed choice about the services that best meet their needs. Young people who choose not to be referred to the program are still entitled to supports through Communities up to the age of 25. Refer to the Child Protection Guide's [Post Care Support](#) for further information.

Applying for further study and employment support

Depending on the course, a young person may be able to apply directly to a TAFE, university, or registered training organisation (RTO). Course guides, enrolment forms, and additional information can be obtained by contacting the relevant provider directly.

In many cases, career guidance officers or enrolment advisors are available to discuss options, explain the next steps, and provide support throughout the application process.

The [Tertiary Institutions Service Centre](#) is the central application service for undergraduate courses at WA universities. It simplifies the application process by allowing students to apply to multiple universities through a single portal. TISC also provides information on key dates, admission requirements, and how to apply online. The [Good Universities Guide](#) can help to search and compare University and TAFE courses across Australia.

There are several different [pathways to university](#) available to students, including entry via ATAR, VET pathways, programs for Aboriginal students, university preparation courses and portfolio/experience-based entry. Students applying to university via the ATAR pathway can access TISC's [Education Access Scheme](#). This scheme supports entry into undergraduate programs for students whose Year 11 and 12 studies and academic achievements have been impacted by challenging circumstances, including young people with a care experience. Care leavers may also be eligible to apply for scholarships or additional supports at university, in recognition of the educational, social and financial challenges that they may have experienced. Young people or members of their care team can contact the university admission teams to ask about equity or inclusion programs that may be suitable.



There are a range of [Fee Free and Low-Cost Training options](#) that young people can explore across WA TAFE Colleges and private training providers. Some of these focus on courses in priority industry areas, or the development of specific skill sets for employment. Furthermore, some TAFE Colleges in WA also offer full fee waivers for young people in OOHHC. Reach out to the young person's caseworker and Education Officer who will facilitate this process if applicable.

The [Solid Futures Aboriginal traineeship program](#) is designed to connect Aboriginal young people with Western Australian public sector agencies, providing a pathway to meaningful careers in government. Trainees receive formal training, paid employment, and support from Aboriginal mentors, providing access to culturally safe employment pathways.

[Jobs and Skills Centres](#) provide a one-stop shop for career support, training opportunities and employment assistance. Specialist services are also available to support [Aboriginal jobseekers in WA](#), including career guidance, job matching and access to the Aboriginal jobs board. Young people from CaLD backgrounds may also benefit from culturally responsive employment, mentoring and career support available through [Jobs and Skills WA](#).

Achiever Awards

The annual Communities' [Achiever Awards](#) recognise, encourage, and provide financial assistance to young people aged 15 to 25 years who are or have been in OOHC and are engaging in post-secondary education and training.

The Achiever Awards are a positive and empowering initiative, celebrating the dedication and resilience of young people in OOHC, and showcasing the significant achievements many have made in further education or vocational training, despite facing adversity.

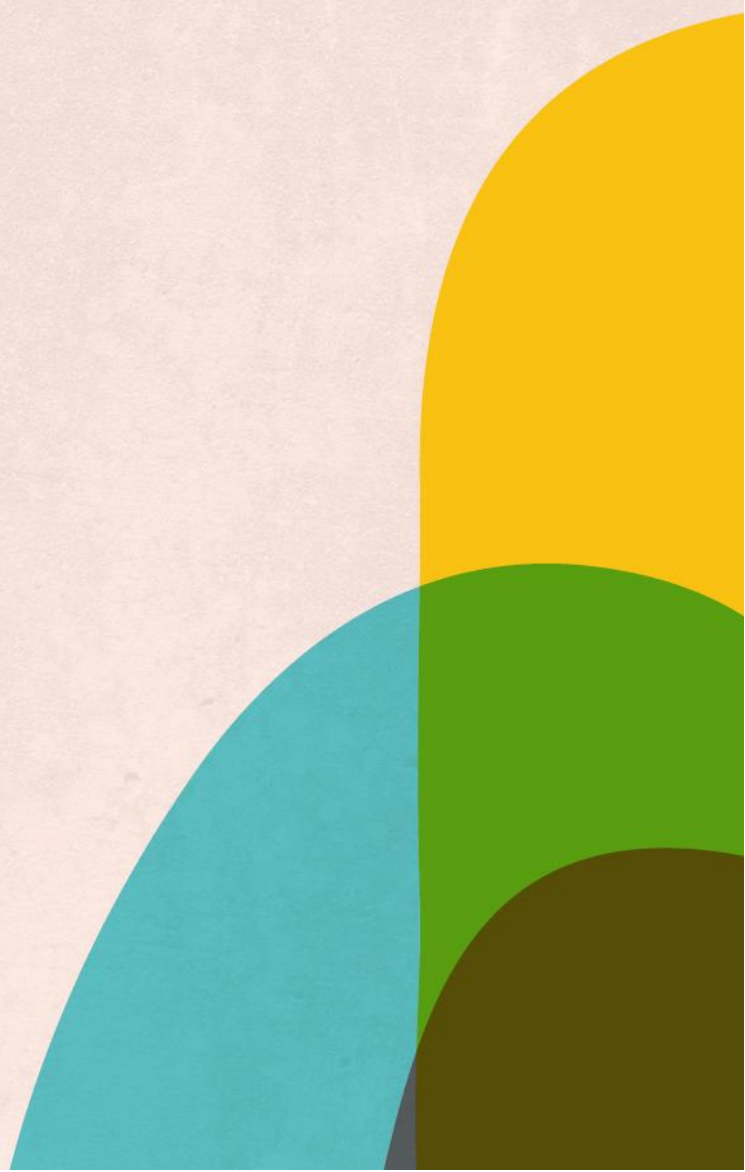
Nominations can be made by anyone who is involved with the young person, and nomination enquiries should be directed to the young person's Communities caseworker early in the year.

CREATE Foundation

[CREATE Foundation](#) is the peak body representing young people with an OOHC experience, delivering a range of empowerment programs designed to build confidence, strengthen self-advocacy, and develop independent living skills for young people both in care and transitioning out of care.

In addition, the [CREATE Your Future Grant Scheme](#) provides financial support to assist young people in their transition to independence, including grants for education and training (e.g. resources such as laptops). CREATE Foundation also offers a range of useful [resources](#) to support young people, along with their carers and families, as they navigate the transition from care.

Wellbeing and Mental Health

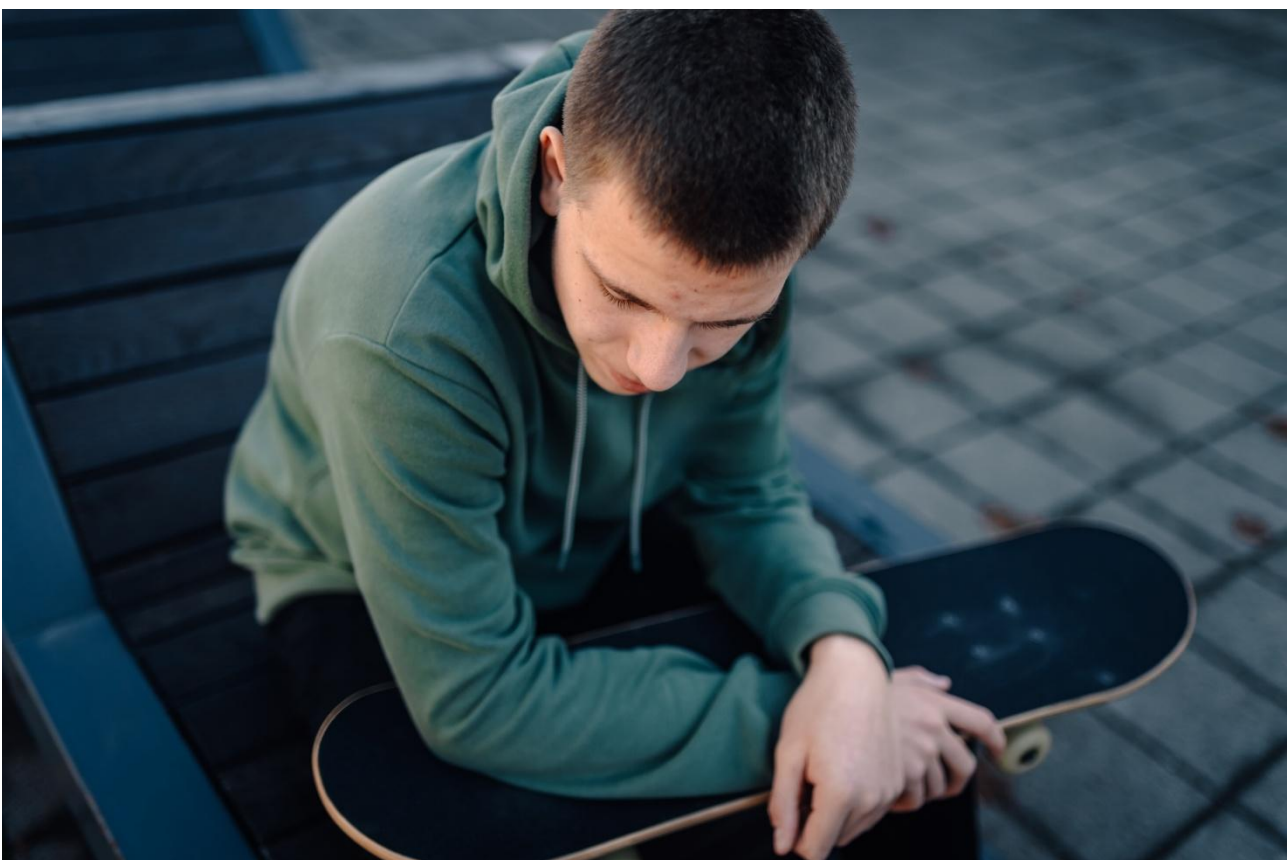


Wellbeing for Children and Young People in OOHC

Children and young people in OOHC are vulnerable to mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression, given the impacts of trauma, loss and disrupted attachments. These experiences can make it harder for them to feel safe, manage emotions, and trust others. In a school setting, this can sometimes be reflected in their behaviour, engagement with learning and interactions with peers and staff. With the right understanding, consistency and support, schools can help children and young people to feel safe, connected, and confident in the learning environment.

Changes in mood, behaviour, sleep patterns, appetite, or social connection can be early signs of mental ill-health. The Communities [Child Development and Trauma Guide](#) provides useful information about the impact of trauma for children in OOHC, and what to be aware of at different ages and stages, including practical ways to support children and when to seek further support and advice.

It is important not to wait and hope things will improve on their own. Mental health difficulties rarely improve without appropriate support and treatment, and accessing professional help early can make a significant difference to a child or young person's recovery and long-term outcomes.



Many Aboriginal people have different perspectives on mental health and wellbeing, which may differ from mainstream Western understandings. [Aboriginal Perspectives on Wellbeing](#) describes this and how family and cultural connections are linked to a person's identity and wellbeing. Aboriginal children and young people who are struggling can find helpful information, resources, and links to culturally safe supports via [Headspace](#) and [Healthdirect](#).

Children and young people from CaLD backgrounds may experience additional stressors that affect their wellbeing, including migration and settlement experiences, separation from family members, language barriers, discrimination, or challenges maintaining connections with their culture, faith, and community. Supporting young people to maintain these connections, while ensuring access to culturally responsive services and interpreters where needed, can strengthen their emotional wellbeing.

Carers who have concerns about a child or young person's mental health or wellbeing should discuss these with the Communities caseworker. Together with the care team, a plan for support will be developed which may include consultation with a District Psychologist and/or a visit to GP for a [mental health assessment](#).

After the assessment, the GP will recommend next steps, which may involve referral to appropriate supports such as psychology services, [Headspace](#) or the Child and Adolescent Health Service ([CAMHS](#)).



Mental health warning signs might include ...

- Feeling sad or down much of the time
- Difficulty coping with everyday activities
- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Reluctance or refusal to attend school
- Avoiding friends or withdrawing from social activities
- Frequent complaints of physical symptoms, such as headaches or stomach aches
- Increased irritability, anger, aggression, or antisocial behaviour (for example, fighting or getting into trouble)
- Spending too much time online or gaming

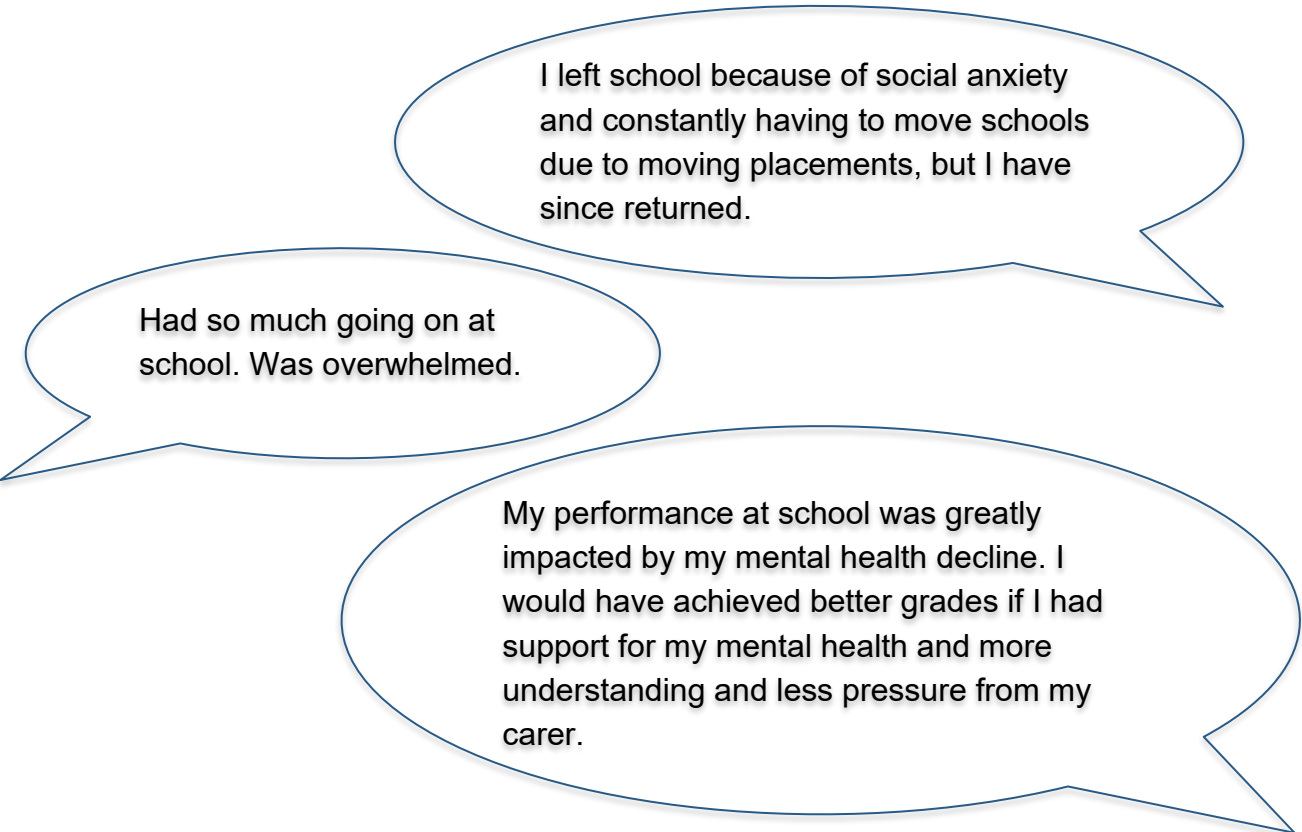
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²³ Adapted from: [Teen mental health: supporting your child | Raising Children Network](#)

The Communities Child Protection Guide — [C.06 Mental Health](#), provides further information about working with and supporting children and young people who are experiencing mental health issues, including clear steps to follow for when an urgent and immediate response is required — [E.13 Managing suicide and self-harming behaviours](#).

Regular attendance and positive engagement in school can be protective factors for children and young people in OOHC, supporting their sense of belonging, connection to peers, and overall wellbeing. Members of the care team should advise the school of any concerns about the child or young person's mental health. School support staff, such as school psychologists, school counsellors, student support officers, chaplains, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, and multicultural support staff, can provide valuable support, guidance, and monitoring when needed.

What young people say ... ²⁴



I left school because of social anxiety and constantly having to move schools due to moving placements, but I have since returned.

Had so much going on at school. Was overwhelmed.

My performance at school was greatly impacted by my mental health decline. I would have achieved better grades if I had support for my mental health and more understanding and less pressure from my carer.

Several confidential counselling services are available to children and young people. Regular conversations about these options can help young people feel more comfortable seeking support when they need it.

²⁴ [CREATE-Post-Care-Report-2021-LR.pdf](#)

For children and young people from CaLD backgrounds, consideration should also be given to culturally responsive services and the use of interpreters where required.

Online and phone-in options include:

- Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800
- [ReachOut](#)
- [Beyond Blue](#)
- [13YARN - Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people](#)
- [Headspace](#)
- [Embrace Multicultural Mental Health](#) (information about culturally responsive mental health services and translated mental health resources to support culturally responsive mental health care)

Managing Challenges at School

A range of factors can impact a child or young person's educational participation, engagement, wellbeing, and achievement at school including;

- **Learning Challenges** (e.g. dyslexia, numeracy / literacy issues, difficulty concentrating or understanding instructions, unable to complete assignments)
- **Health and Disability Challenges** (e.g. physical disabilities affecting participation, chronic health conditions resulting in frequent absenteeism, sensory difficulties, neurodevelopmental conditions such as ADHD or autism, fatigue, sleep difficulties, or medication side effects)
- **Social Challenges** (e.g. experiencing bullying, peer pressure, peer conflicts etc)
- **Emotional and Mental Health Challenges** (e.g. anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, anorexia, trauma affecting learning and behaviour; feeling disconnected)
- **Behavioural Challenges** (e.g. disruptive behaviour in class, difficulty following school rules or routines, difficulty regulating emotions and behaviour, impulsive or risk-taking behaviour)
- **Family and Environmental Challenges** (e.g. unstable housing or homelessness, family conflict or separation, caring responsibilities for family member/s, financial hardship affecting access to school resources, placement changes)
- **Attendance and Engagement Challenges** (e.g. chronic absenteeism, frequent lateness, disengagement from education, abscondment from placement)
- **Cultural and Identity Challenges** (e.g. language barriers, adjusting to a new school, fear of discrimination or racism, sexuality, or gender identity)

It is important for caregivers and the broader care team to stay informed about what is happening at school. School meetings often involve the Communities caseworker, Education Officer and other relevant professionals to help plan and coordinate support for the child or young person. This may involve developing a documented plan focused on wellbeing and safety, arranging referrals to external services, and identifying appropriate school-based supports, such as a school chaplain, school psychology services, or regular wellbeing check-ins. By working together, schools and members of the care team can create a more consistent and supportive environment that helps the child or young person feel safe and understood.

Schools in Western Australia are required to manage student behaviour using a positive and educative approach. This focuses on teaching and reinforcing appropriate behaviours, and supporting students to develop the skills needed to manage their emotions and interactions with others so they can participate in learning. Schools should respond to behaviour in a fair and consistent way, recognising that children and young people in OOHC are likely to have experienced trauma or disruption that can affect how they respond to school environments.

If a child or young person is struggling with emotional regulation or experiencing conflict with staff or peers at school, it is especially important that the Communities caseworker and relevant care team members work closely with the school. Positive, respectful relationships with staff will help everyone to understand the child's needs and will lead to better long-term outcomes.

If a child is suspended after a serious incident at school, their carer and Communities caseworker will receive a formal letter from the school outlining what occurred and the length of the suspension. Schools have clear processes around suspension and before students can return to school, a re-entry meeting is usually required. This meeting involves the child and the carer and/or Communities caseworker and focuses on supporting a safe and successful return to learning. Schools in Western Australia aim to use restorative approaches, and it is common for students to participate in a restorative conversation or meeting before returning, to repair relationships and re-set expectations.

If the child is experiencing ongoing challenges with conflict and behaviours at school, a documented plan should be developed to help ensure teachers and other staff respond consistently and appropriately to their behaviours, while supporting them to develop skills for self-regulation and positive social interaction.

When students struggle to regulate and manage their emotions across a full school day, some schools may suggest a part-time attendance arrangement. This is often referred to as a 'modified' or 'transitional' timetable. It is important to note that these arrangements should only be implemented when necessary and should always be considered a short-term solution. They must include clear goals and a planned pathway to support the child's return to full-time attendance.

Children and young people should not be disadvantaged in their education because of illness, injury, hospitalisation, or mental health challenges. Early planning and collaboration between education, health, and care teams can help minimise disruption to learning and support positive educational outcomes.

When a child or young person is medically cleared to resume their education (including extended stay at hospital), a documented plan should include any required adjustments, wellbeing supports, or gradual re-engagement strategies to support a successful transition to regular attendance and participation in learning.

For further information about support services and programs that support behaviour, health and wellbeing in Western Australia's government schools, click [here](#).

Supporting Gender Diversity and LGBTQI+ Young People

In Australia, up to 21 per cent of high school students identify as LGBTQIA+, and this proportion is increasing both locally and around the world.²⁵ Even though community awareness and understanding of gender diversity and sexuality is growing, young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ can still face challenges that stem from ongoing discrimination and a lack of acceptance in wider society. These pressures can contribute to increased stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges. For young people in OOHC, these pressures can feel overwhelming, given they are often already coping with increased stress due to trauma and separation from family.

Members of the care team can make a significant difference in the lives of LGBTQIA+ young people by creating an environment where their identity is accepted, valued, and celebrated. This supports their sense of safety, self-confidence, and belonging. They can also support wellbeing by encouraging participation in LGBTQIA+ affirming events, activities, rallies, or peer support groups, and by being involved alongside the young person when possible.

The [Freedom Centre](#) provides a safe, inclusive and welcoming space for LGBTQIA+ Perth-based young people aged 12 to 26 to connect with peers, access support, and explore their identity. The service offers free counselling, peer support, social groups, wellbeing workshops, information and referrals, with a focus on promoting mental health, reducing social isolation and encouraging help-seeking. [Freedom State](#) extends this support to LGBTQIA+ young people in regional Western Australia, delivering free peer support, wellbeing programs, information and community connection opportunities in locations including Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie.

The [Youth Pride Network](#) is passionate about using advocacy to ensure LGBTQIA+ young people are fully included, accepted and celebrated by their community. Their website contains a broad range of resources to support young people, including information about

²⁵ [About | Minus18](#)

wellbeing, identity, rights, community connections, support services and opportunities to get involved in advocacy and peer networks.

[Q Life](#) (1800 184 527) offers free, anonymous peer support for LGBTIQIA+ people, their families and allies. Support is available by phone or webchat every day from 3pm to 9pm.

Schools have a responsibility to provide safe, inclusive and respectful environments for all students, including those who are LGBTIQIA+, and are supported by the [Guidelines for Supporting Sexual and Gender Diversity in Schools](#), developed by the Equal Opportunity Commission WA.

Some schools offer LGBTIQIA+ student support groups, and students can often access additional support through the school's student services team. Carers and other care team members can help by encouraging open conversations about a young person's experiences at school and listening carefully to any concerns they raise.

If discrimination, bullying, or exclusion related to a young person's gender identity or sexuality is reported, it is important to act early and engage with school staff to ensure their safety and wellbeing are prioritised.

School Attendance

Attending school every day enables children to get the most from their education and creates opportunities for better life outcomes. Learning builds on previous knowledge, so regular attendance helps children stay engaged, keep up with new learning, and make steady progress.

If a child or young person in OOHC is unable to attend school for any reason, the school should be advised as soon as possible by telephone or via the schools app. While it's okay for students to miss school when they are unwell or unable to attend for cultural or religious reasons, if they are away for three days or more, it is a good idea to talk with their teacher/s to find out what they missed and how they can be supported to catch up on work.

If a child or young person is reluctant to attend school, members of the care team should work with school support staff to identify strategies that support attendance. This may include using practical strategies from the Department of Education's [things you can do](#) resource and developing a coordinated plan with the school.

'School refusal' or 'school can't' are the terms used when children and young people experience significant distress or anxiety about the idea of attending school. There can be many reasons why this situation develops, including bullying, family conflict, anxiety and depression, learning difficulties, problems with a teacher or other worries. [Let's Talk About School Refusal](#) provides useful information about the factors that often lead to school refusal and strategies to support the reconnection to school and learning. Further information and tips for responding to school refusal can be found [here](#).

It's important for children and young people to go to school while they're getting help with the issue that has caused the school refusal. This will help build their confidence and resilience. It keeps the child connected with learning and is important for social development. It's often easier for children to return to school if they haven't been away from school for too long.

Managing Transitions

Children and young people experience many transitions throughout their educational journey. These may include starting early childhood education and care, moving into kindergarten and primary school, transitioning from primary to secondary school, changing schools, and leaving secondary school for further education, training, employment, or independent adulthood. Transitions also occur in everyday routines, such as arriving at school or an early learning setting, moving between classrooms, teachers, activities, or subjects, and returning home at the end of the day.

These transitions can be especially challenging for children and young people in OOHC. Past experiences of instability and disruption can make changes and adjustment to new learning environments more stressful. Some children may need additional support to help them feel safe, connected, and engaged in learning during these periods of change.

Maintaining 'relational continuity', meaning the presence of strong, stable, and supportive relationships throughout transitions, is especially important for children and young people in OOHC. Consistent relationships with carers, siblings, family members, teachers, caseworkers, and other significant adults can help reduce disruption to learning and wellbeing. Ensuring there is at least one trusted adult supporting them through every transition can strengthen continuity and contribute to more positive long-term outcomes.

[Transitions in learning communities - Be You](#) is a resource that can assist with navigating transitions in education, covering all the common transitions across the ages.

[Supporting Successful Transitions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students](#) provides information about culturally responsive school practices that can support successful school transitions for Aboriginal children and young people.

[Milestone and Transitions](#) is a resource that helps caregivers of children and young people with disability prepare for periods of change and navigate discussions with schools and service providers about their child's needs.

Alternative Schooling Options

In some circumstances, mainstream schooling may not be an option or the best fit for a child or young person in OOHC. Where a student's needs cannot be adequately met in their current setting, Communities caseworkers, Education Officers and others may consider alternative schooling options, including:

- The [School of Isolated and Distance Education](#) for students who are unable to attend mainstream schools for reasons such as geographical isolation, local schools not offering appropriate courses, or where students are unable to attend regular school due to severe health conditions.
- [Curriculum and Re-engagement in Education](#)²⁶ (CARE) Schools are independent schools that play a crucial role in re-engaging students in education. They offer flexible learning programs, vocational education and individualised support. CARE schools are often well suited to young people in OOHC, as they provide safe, caring environments with high staff-student ratios.
- The [Western Australian College of Agriculture](#) offers education, training and residential facilities for students in Year 10 – 12. Students study a range of subjects that lead to their Western Australian Certificate of Education, along with vocational qualifications in agriculture.
- [Home Education](#) involves a parent or carer delivering a child or young person's education at home, in line with the Western Australian curriculum. It should be noted that this is only considered in exceptional circumstances for children and young people in OOHC and requires recommendation from the Education Officer and District Director approval. Home Educators must also register with the Department of Education and undergo regular reviews with Department staff.

[Flexible Learning Options](#) (FLOs) is a database that provides information about a variety of alternative education options available across various locations. These options primarily focus on secondary school students who need a different kind of support—those at risk of disengaging from mainstream schooling or whose needs are not being effectively met in a traditional school setting. Some programs listed are delivered as a learning program within a school, and some are delivered by alternative providers on separate sites.

Bullying and Cyberbullying

All children and young people have the right to feel safe at school. Bullying occurs when a person or group of people repeatedly directs verbal, physical, social, or psychological aggression towards an individual or group, with the intention of causing harm, distress, or fear. It can happen in person, online, or both, and may be obvious or hidden.

²⁶ [CARE Schools | AISWA](#)

Bullying in schools is a complex issue involving many individuals within the school community, including students who are bullied, students who bully others, bystanders, school staff and families.

If friends or peers disagree or argue, or if someone says something mean on one occasion, it can be unpleasant and hurtful ... but it isn't bullying. Bullying is repeated and intentional behaviour that hurts someone and usually involves a power imbalance, making it difficult for the person being targeted to stop or defend themselves.

Bullying can have long-lasting effects on everyone involved and can take the form of racism, discrimination related to sexuality or gender diversity, or even the targeting of children and young people in OOHC.

Schools comply with the Student Behaviour in Public Schools policy and procedures which includes guidance on preventing and responding to bullying. Addressing and preventing bullying involves everyone talking together openly and respectfully and taking the necessary steps for the bullying to stop. Further information can be found on the [Bullying. No Way!](#) website, along with the Australian government campaign [Let's Stop Bullying](#).

If a child or young person in OOHC is experiencing bullying at school, or there are concerns that they may be experiencing bullying, this should be taken seriously and reported to both the school and the Communities caseworker immediately.

**Signs of bullying:**

You may notice the child you're supporting:

- Doesn't want to go to school.
- Changes their usual route or method of getting to school.
- Experiences a decline in academic performance, such as poorer test or assignment results.
- Shows changes in eating or sleeping patterns.
- Has frequent episodes of crying, tearfulness, or noticeable mood swings.
- Has unexplained bruises, scratches, or other injuries.
- Comes home with damaged or missing belongings.
- appears unusually hungry.

Racism can harm the health, wellbeing and development of the children and young people who experience it. If racist bullying is occurring at school, get help from staff immediately and be sure to communicate this information with the child's caseworker. For detailed advice about how to deal with racist bullying at school, refer to the following website: [What to do if your child experiences racism | Raising Children Network](#).

Cyberbullying is the use of digital technologies to bully, harass or intimidate someone. It can occur through text messages or emails, hurtful messages or posts, sharing embarrassing images or videos, spreading online rumours or gossip, impersonating someone, or deliberately excluding them from online groups or activities. Online bullying can have a devastating impact on children and young people, whose online lives are often a key part of their identity and social interactions. A child or young person may not disclose that they are being bullied online because they fear it will make the situation worse, or because they are worried they may lose access to their devices or the internet.



The [eSafety Commissioner's Online Safety Book](#) provides valuable information on recognising the signs of online bullying, as well as advice on how to support a child or young person and report the behaviour.

Safe Use of Technology

Mobile phones, tablets, laptops, and other devices are important for children to learn and remain connected with each other and the world. Carers and other members of the care team play a key role in helping children use technology safely and protecting them from online risks and harm.

Online safety is important for children and young people because it helps protect their wellbeing, privacy, safety, and sense of security. They need the skills and confidence to navigate online environments safely, supported by appropriate rules and protections. Communities have developed an [eSafety information sheet for carers](#) of children and young people in OOHC to help manage online risks. The eSafety Commissioner also provides a range of helpful [guides and resources](#), including specific [online safety resources for Aboriginal children and young people](#) and their families.

The *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Bill 2024* has introduced a mandatory minimum age of 16 for accounts on age-restricted social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, X, Snapchat, YouTube, Reddit, and Kick. Parents,

carers, and caseworkers cannot give their consent to let children aged under 16 years old use these platforms. Exempt services include educational tools (like Google Classroom), health services (like Kids Helpline), and primary messaging/gaming services (like WhatsApp, Messenger, Roblox, and Discord).

All public schools in Western Australia have implemented a ban on the use of mobile phones by students, to reduce distractions and improve student engagement under the [Student Mobile Phones in Public Schools Policy](#). This ban takes effect from the time they arrive at the school site until the end of the school day. Under the policy, primary school students cannot have a mobile phone in their possession and if they bring a phone to school, it will be stored safely by staff until the end of the day. Secondary school students are allowed to have their phone in their possession but must turn it off and keep it out of sight until the end of the school day.

Support for Carers and Families





Supporting children and young people in OOHC is an important job, but it is equally important that carers, families and members of the care team prioritise their self-care and get the support to manage the emotional and practical demands that they face, particularly when supporting children with complex needs. Taking time out and reaching out for support when needed is a positive step.

A variety of services and resources are available to support families and carers in Western Australia.

For foster and family carers:

- [OurSPACE](#) WA is a counselling and support service for Department of Communities family and foster carers. The service is state-wide, free, and confidential.
- [Fostering Connections](#) is a centralised service provided by the Department of Communities for all foster and family carers who are looking for information and advice
- [Foster Care Association of WA](#) is an independent organisation that supports foster and family carers and advocates on their behalf.
- The Department of Communities website provides further information about [supports available to foster and family carers](#), and additional [resources](#) that may assist them. The Communities [Family and Foster Carer Learning](#) team offers a range of learning and development opportunities for WA family and foster carers, and care team members to build on their strengths, areas of interest, and knowledge and skills to better support children and young people in OOHC.

- The [Advocate for Children in Care](#) can also provide guidance for relatives, carers, or professionals involved with children in care to access support or raise concerns on behalf of a child.
- The Raising Children's Network provides useful information about supports available to [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinship carers and foster carers](#).
- The [Carer Kafe](#) resource library contains a series of podcast, guides, toolkits and presentations designed to support family and foster carers.
- For culturally safe and confidential one-on-one support, Aboriginal carers and family members can access [13YARN](#) on 139276 if having trouble coping.

For family members:

- [Family Inclusion Network of WA](#) is a peer-led organisation that supports and advocates for families involved in the child protection system, promoting their voices, rights and inclusion in decision-making.
- The Department of Communities website provides further [information and support for parents and families of children and young people](#)
- For culturally safe and confidential one-on-one support, Aboriginal carers can access [13YARN](#) on 139276 if feeling overwhelmed or having trouble coping.

Complaints and feedback:

Issues or concerns may arise throughout a child or young person's schooling. Raising concerns early through an informal discussion with the teacher, year coordinator or principal is often the best first step in resolving the matter.

If concerns cannot be resolved at the school level, The Department of Education's complaints and concerns process should be followed, with further information available on the [Department of Education's website](#).

Communities also respects the right for anyone to lodge a complaint or provide feedback about their services, staff or any aspect of its operations with further information available on the [Department of Communities - Child protection complaints and feedback](#) page.

A [Children and young people complaints and feedback form](#) is available for children and young people in OOHC to speak up about their concerns.

Children, young people, carers, family members, and other supporters who are dissatisfied with the outcome of a complaint, or who wish to take their complaint outside the Department of Communities, can contact the [Ombudsman Western Australia](#) on (08) 9220 7555 or 1800 117 000 (country free call).

Key Definitions and Abbreviations

Terms and Acronyms:	Definition:
Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer (AIEO):	A school-based staff member who supports Aboriginal students, strengthens connections between school, family and community, and promotes culturally safe learning environments.
Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO):	An organisation governed and operated by Aboriginal people that delivers culturally appropriate services to Aboriginal people and communities.
Aboriginal Practice Leader (APL):	A Department of Communities role providing cultural guidance and support to ensure culturally informed decision-making for Aboriginal children and young people.
Aboriginal Representative Organisation (ARO)	Place-based Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) that help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care to maintain and grow connection to family, culture and Country.
Additional Child Care Subsidy (ACCS – Child Wellbeing):	A government subsidy that supports vulnerable children, including those in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC), by covering the cost of approved childcare.
Alternative Schooling Options:	Education programs outside mainstream schools, such as CARE schools, Flexible Learning Options or distance education, designed to meet diverse student needs.
Attachment:	The emotional bond between a child and their caregiver that supports a sense of safety, trust and wellbeing.
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):	A neurodevelopmental condition that can affect attention, impulse control and activity levels, which may impact learning, behaviour and relationships.
Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR):	A ranking used nationally to determine eligibility for entry into university courses.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):	A neurodevelopmental condition that affects how a person communicates, interacts with others and experiences the world. It can include a range of strengths and support needs.
Best Interests of the Child:	A guiding principle where decisions are made to ensure the safety, wellbeing and development of the child.
Care Plan:	A plan developed by the caseworker and care team outlining how a child in the CEO's care needs will be met across the nine dimensions of care.
Care Team:	A core group of people important to the child and their carer which may include parents, siblings, other family, carers and their family, family friends, neighbours or other important people to the child, in addition to professional support people, like the caseworker.
Caseworker:	<p>In the document, this typically refers to the Department of Communities staff member responsible for coordinating care arrangements and planning and decision-making for a child in OOHC (NB: "Child Safety Practitioner" is the official title for Communities caseworkers).</p> <p>Community Sector Organisations and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations providing care to children in OOHC also employ caseworkers who support carers and families.</p>
Community Sector Organisation (CSO):	A non-government, not-for-profit organisation that delivers community-based services to support the safety, wellbeing and development of children and families.
Cultural Identity:	A child's sense of belonging to their culture, including connection to family, community, language and traditions.
Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CaLD):	A broad term used to describe people from diverse cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, including people who speak languages other than English at home (or alongside English).
Cultural Responsiveness:	The ability to recognise and respond appropriately to cultural differences in a respectful, safe and inclusive way.
Cultural Safety:	An environment where a child feels respected, supported and safe in expressing their cultural identity.

Cultural Support Plan:	A stand-alone document that is updated as part of the care plan to identify, track and demonstrate how a child's cultural needs will be met.
Cyberbullying:	Bullying behaviour that occurs through digital technologies such as phones, social media or online platforms.
Developmental Delay:	When a child does not reach developmental milestones at the expected age, which may affect learning, communication or physical development.
Documented Plan:	A school-developed plan outlining the supports, strategies and adjustments in place to meet a student's learning, behaviour and/or wellbeing needs. This may include supports for students who may be at risk of harm to themselves or others.
English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD)	An EAL/D student is learning Standard Australian English as an additional language or dialect and may need support to access learning and participate fully in education.
Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC):	Services and programs for young children, including childcare services, kindergarten and early learning settings.
Education Officer:	Department of Communities employees located in district offices, metropolitan therapeutic residential care and secure care settings who address and support the educational needs of children in the CEO's care.
Emotional Regulation:	Processes and strategies individuals use to manage and respond to their emotional experiences in appropriate and adaptive ways.
Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD):	A condition caused by prenatal alcohol exposure that can affect learning, behaviour and development.
Home Stretch WA:	A program that supports young people leaving OOHHC to remain in care or receive support until age 21.
Individual Disability Allocation (IDA):	Additional funding provided to schools to support students with eligible diagnosed disabilities.
Inclusive Education:	An approach that ensures all students, including those with disability or additional needs, can access and participate in education.
Interpreting and Translating Services (ITS):	Services that assist people who speak different languages to communicate and access information. Interpreting is

	used for spoken communication, while translating is used for written information.
Learning Support Coordinator (LSC):	A school staff member responsible for coordinating support for students with additional learning needs.
Local Intake Area:	The geographic area that determines a child's entitlement to enrol in a particular public school.
Mental Health:	A person's emotional, psychological and social wellbeing.
National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS):	A national program that provides funding and support for people with disability.
Out-of-Home Care (OOHC):	Any care arrangements for children outside of their own family home including after-hours placement, district care, foster group homes and transitional high needs care. (Definition from the CP Guide – CHECK)
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):	A mental health condition that can develop following exposure to traumatic events. Symptoms may include heightened anxiety, emotional withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbance and challenges in learning or behaviour.
Reasonable Adjustments:	A term used in schools to describe the changes required to support students with disability to access learning on the same basis as others.
Registered Training Organisation (RTO):	An approved provider that delivers nationally recognised training and qualifications.
School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA):	The WA authority responsible for curriculum, assessment and certification standards.
School Refusal/Reluctance:	Ongoing difficulty attending school due to emotional distress, such as anxiety.
Student Services or Wellbeing Team:	School staff who support student wellbeing, behaviour and engagement. This may include psychologists, chaplains, Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, student support coordinators and other support staff.
Trauma:	A response to frightening or harmful experiences that overwhelm a child's ability to cope and affects their sense of safety and wellbeing. Trauma can result from a single event or ongoing experiences (e.g. abuse, neglect, or family

	violence), and can affect a child's development, behaviour, relationships, and sense of safety.
Trauma-Informed Practice:	An approach that recognises the impact of trauma and prioritises safety, trust and supportive relationships.
Transition:	A period of change, such as moving schools or leaving care, which may require additional support.
Transition to Independent Living Allowance (TILA):	A one-off payment to support young people leaving care with expenses such as education, housing or employment.
Vocational Education and Training (VET):	Education and training that focuses on practical skills for specific jobs or industries.
Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE):	The senior secondary qualification awarded to students who complete Years 11 and 12 in WA.
Western Australian Statement of Student Achievement (WASSA):	A record of all courses, programs and achievements completed by a student during senior secondary school.
Wellbeing:	A person's overall physical, emotional, social and cultural health.
Youth Transition Coordinator (YTC):	A Department of Education staff member who supports young people involved in the youth justice system to transition into education, training, or employment.

Disclaimer: Artificial intelligence (AI) was used for editorial assistance in the preparation of this document. All content, decisions, and final approval remain the responsibility of the Department of Communities.

The page features a decorative header at the top with a row of colored squares in yellow, green, light blue, dark blue, and red. Below this, the background is a light grey. Large, overlapping abstract shapes in dark blue, teal, red, and dark grey occupy the lower half of the page, framing the text.

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