

Caring Together

Information and news for Foster and Kinship Carers in South Australia

Issue 1 | 2021



Message from the Chief Executive

Dear carers

I'm delighted to launch *Caring Together*, a newsletter for South Australian foster and kinship carers.

Every day across South Australia, you and carers like you provide incredible support to the children in your care. You are an invaluable part of the care team. Simply put, you bring something to the team that no department or agency possibly can.

That's why the department is committed to our relationship with you. Last year we launched the Statement of Commitment, a document we developed in partnership with Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA (CFKC-SA), and Child and Family Focus SA.

We are committed to bringing the Statement of Commitment to life every day and to ensuring carers feel *informed, supported, consulted, valued and respected*. We're working on new ways to talk with you, hear from you and give you the information you need about the department.

In this newsletter we hope to *support and inform* you by bringing you news and information from DCP on a regular basis. Whether it's a big policy change that affects you in your caring role, or information to support children in your care, we hope you will feel like we're in this together.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to share with you that I recently met with Fiona Endacott, Chief Executive Officer and Megan Hender, Board Chairperson of CFKC-SA. CFKC-SA recently hosted the National Foster & Kinship Care Conference. DCP was a proud sponsor of this event which was a great success. I hope many of you had the opportunity to attend the inaugural virtual event.

I hope you enjoy the first issue of *Caring Together*. Wishing you a great school break, and I encourage you to reach out if you need the assistance of your case workers and support workers.

Cathy Taylor

Chief Executive, Department for Child Protection

save the date

Foster and Kinship Carers Week

12 - 18 September 2021

Speak to your DCP office and support workers for more information about upcoming events closer to the date.

New services and programs for children in care on online hub

Over the past year, DCP has been working to expand the *Investing in their future* initiative, which is a whole of government commitment providing priority access to services for children and young people in care, and who have left care.

This initiative now includes a more comprehensive list of services across all of a child or young person's life domains – from health, education and housing to recreational activities, training and employment. We have also pursued services not only for children and young people currently in care, but for those who have left care – up to the age of 25.

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Investing in their future

Check out our new online hub for *Investing in their future* on the DCP website, which is a one-stop-shop for all services under this newly expanded initiative, including:



health services



dental services



therapeutic support



education & training



transition to adulthood



recreational activities

Click into a topic – such as dental services – and read about what children and young people in care and leaving care may be eligible for and how to apply.

Some of the new services and programs we have pursued through the *Investing in their future* initiative include:

- free, extended ambulance cover for care leavers up to the age of 21
- 200 scholarships for children in care to attend South Australian Catholic schools
- an alternate pathway to access dental and orthodontic services in a partnership with the Australian Dental Foundation

You can read more about some of these initiatives in this issue of *Caring Together*.

You can access the online hub here:

childprotection.sa.gov.au/iitf

Nominate for the SA Child Protection Awards now

The inaugural South Australian Child Protection Awards were launched recently, with nominations now open across 12 categories of awards.

The awards recognise partners of the Department for Child Protection who have made an outstanding contribution to improve the lives of children and young people in care or at risk of entering care.

The awards will also acknowledge the incredible role of family-based carers and volunteers, including through the following award categories:

- 2021 SA Foster Carer award
- 2021 SA Kinship Carer award
- 2021 Volunteer of the Year

Nominations are now open and will close 1 August 2021. The Awards will be delivered by the Department for Child Protection in partnership with the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) on 8 September, during National Child Protection Week. To nominate or find out more, go to:

childprotection.sa.gov.au/child-protection-initiatives/sa-child-protection-awards/



NAIDOC Week 2021

NAIDOC Week 2021 is being held 4 - 11 July. This year's theme, *Heal Country!* recognises that Country is more than a place and is inherent to the identity of First Nations peoples.

Children, young people, carers and staff across DCP are participating in a range of events to celebrate the history, culture and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

For more information or to find a public event near you, go to: naidoc.org.au



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Helping young people transition to high school

From 2022, year 6 will become the last year of primary school and year 7 will be the first year of high school for all students in South Australia. The transition from primary school to secondary school is a critical time for all students, but particularly for children in care. They may have more overwhelming feelings about this change. If the child in your care has concerns about moving to high school, you can support them by using some strategies for managing change and transitions.

Reassure them

Help them understand that as many things as possible will remain intact. For instance, reassure them that the routines you have together will stay the same.

Listen and talk together

Talk to them about any fears and what they need. Talk to them about the transition and prepare them for any changes. Your child may need to have repeated discussions about upcoming changes to minimise anxiety.

Use transitional objects

Allow your child to take with them a special object/s to help them feel connected and safe.

You can also help your child by:

- finding out about how they might become familiar with the new school, new transport and class schedules
- making the most of school orientation and information events held by the new school together
- organising uniforms and school supplies in advance

Give your child some choices

Where possible provide your child with some measure of control over the upcoming change by offering them choices. Their anxiety may be reduced if they can influence some aspect of the change. This could be what new stationary they get or choice of any free electives at school.

Teach them how to calm themselves

Activities such as progressive muscle relaxation, calm breathing, meditation, mindfulness, relaxing music, walking, yoga, having a warm bath and therapeutic writing can all be helpful for children and young people who are struggling with big emotions.

“ Ensuring your child has the same daily routine will help them feel less anxious ”

Your child's DCP case worker may be able to:

- work with the child's current primary school and explore options with the new secondary school to make the transition easier
- support the child to visit their secondary school over an extended transition period and meet their new teacher before they start
- familiarise the child with their new school environment through a social storybook

Your child's primary school may be able to:

- hold a 'team around the child' meeting. Alternatively you can ask that a meeting like this occurs, and that you are invited to talk about the child's transition needs





Book packs for under 7s

Children in care receive free books as gifts until they turn 7 years old. The Read to Me project helps children in care to improve their reading and language skills and encourages positive carer–child interactions to support healthy brain development.

The Read to Me project is a book-gifting program through Raising Literacy Australia that supports children in care to improve their reading and language skills.

Each child in care will automatically receive free books as gifts every three (3) months until they turn 7 years old, creating a library that they can keep and enjoy for many years to come.

A start-up library launches each child’s reading journey, featuring:

- 10 age-appropriate picture and board books
- a Read to Me library bag
- carer resources, including an activity book and role-modelling DVD

If you are caring for a child under 7 years old and have not received a library pack, please talk to your child’s case worker.

How often do we get a library pack?

Home library packs are sent every 3 months in March, June, September and December. The books are specially selected based on each child’s age.

Who runs the project?

The Read to Me project is run by Raising Literacy Australia, with support from the Department for Child Protection, Variety – The Children’s Charity of South Australia, Department for Education, Australian Publishing Industry and Cochrane’s Transport.

Are any personal details disclosed?

No. Raising Literacy Australia does not receive any personal details about your family or the child in care, as all packs are sent out by the Department for Child Protection.

Dame Roma Mitchell Grants open soon

The Dame Roma Mitchell Grants are available to children and young people aged under 30, with a care experience.

The grants provide opportunities for eligible children and young people in care who are, or have been, under the guardianship of the Chief Executive or Minister for Child Protection in SA for at least one full year to

- achieve personal goals
- contribute to health and wellbeing
- provide developmental opportunities

There are two funding rounds held each year with the second round in 2021 to open on 16 August and close 24 September.

To find out more about the grants, visit: childprotection.sa.gov.au/drmg



Free and low cost dental for kids in care

Did you know that children in care may be eligible for free or low cost dental and orthodontic services, even after they turn 18?

Children and young people in care may be eligible for free dental check-ups and treatment in an agreement between DCP and SA Dental. Where there is a clinical need, they may also be able to receive free orthodontic treatment. Care leavers can also access free or discounted dental services in our partnership with the Australian Dental Foundation, where in receipt of eligible Centrelink income support payments.

The Australian Dental Foundation may also offer orthodontic treatment for kids currently in care, (subject to eligibility) as well reducing the costs of accessing emergency after-hours dental care. Check out these services and more in our online hub at: childprotection.sa.gov.au/iitf



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100 more Catholic school scholarships now available

The department has been working to ensure children and young people in care have opportunities to reach their full potential. In 2020, DCP partnered with Catholic Education SA (CESA) to provide 100 scholarships for children in care all across South Australia. Following the successful uptake of the program, a further 100 scholarships are now available.

DCP acknowledges the funding and significant support from CESA in providing and co-administering this program.



I am so appreciative that three of my four children have been accepted into two fantastic schools under the Catholic School Education Scholarship program for secondary and primary.

With this scholarship the children have been given an opportunity to shine, excel and achieve their learning in a positive environment that is nurturing, supportive and academically challenging that will benefit them all throughout their lives. This is something we could have only dreamt of!

All three children are clever and motivated in their learning and now the scholarship will give them so many benefits that will create for them self-discipline, good ethics and gained knowledge, this will allow them better choices in their career paths and brighter future. Following their school visit this has left them, "so excited and can't wait till next year, can we start now!" And for this I am forever grateful!



- DCP family-based carer

COVID-19

Keep up to date with the latest health advice and information relating to coronavirus (COVID-19) at the SA Government COVID-19 website:

covid-19.sa.gov.au

More specific information about talking to children about coronavirus is available at: childprotection.sa.gov.au/carers/resources-for-carers/talking-to-children-in-care-about-coronavirus

What is a Catholic school scholarship?

Funded by Catholic Education SA, the scholarships provide fee free education for recipients, including full tuition, uniforms, textbooks, excursions and extracurricular activities, continuing each year until the child or young person completes their schooling.

Who is eligible?

All children and young people in care can apply. They can be primary or secondary-aged and there are participating schools all across rural, regional and metropolitan SA.

How do I find out more and apply?

To express an interest, speak with your DCP case worker. More information, including the list of participating Catholic Schools is available on the online hub.

Go to: childprotection.sa.gov.au/iitf



Activities these school holidays

- The Art Gallery of South Australia has free entry and loads of other events during July. Free tours designed for blind and vision-impaired visitors are also available for children and teens on request. Go to: agsa.sa.gov.au
- Check out your local library's school holiday program!
- Illuminate Adelaide is lighting up the city from 16 July to 1 August. Lots of installations are free. Go to: illuminateadelaide.com
- Adelaide Central Market is offering free and low cost *Big Market Adventures for Little Foodies*. Visit: adelaidecentralmarket.com.au
- The ABC is running an Indigenous Language Art Competition. Navigate to 'Comps' from: education.abc.net.au
- Find rainy day and fun activities at: openyourworld.sa.gov.au



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Continued support for carers, and for young people in care up to 25 years of age

When young people in care turn 18, many of them want to continue living in their current family-based placement. There are two programs available to support carers and young people over the age of 18.

Stability in Family-Based Care program

Since 2019, DCP's Stability in Family-Based Care (SFBC) program has been supporting young people with the opportunity to remain in their family-based care placement until they turn 21.

The program provides primary family-based carers who continue to care for a young person after their Youth Court order or long term formal agreement expires on their 18th birthday with extended carer payments, until the young person turns 21.

As part of the SFBC program, there is liaison with the department – but it's less intensive than guardianship case management and is designed to support the young person in their family environment.

Through a recent budget announcement, DCP will be piloting support for young people exiting residential care who are turning 18.

Over 18 Education initiative

For young people over 18 participating in secondary or tertiary study, family-based carers may be eligible for an additional education payment. The payment will be available until the young person moves out of the family home, completes their qualification or turns 25 – whichever is sooner.

Where can I find more information?

More information on eligibility and how to apply can be found at:

childprotection.sa.gov.au/carers/how-dcp-works/carers-support-payments

Carer Reviews update

The *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017* requires all approved family-based carers to be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

From 1 July 2021, all approved carers will now have the same length of time between reviews, that being every two years, unless there are circumstances that require it sooner. This will be supported by an updated Carer Review template.

Please speak with your support worker for further information on these changes.



Ambulance cover extended to 21 years

Eligible young people leaving care can now access free ambulance cover for emergency hospital transport until they turn 21. This is available through a partnership between DCP and the South Australian Ambulance Service.

Although many children and young people in care are already eligible for free ambulance cover, this change recognises the many benefits of supporting our young care leavers, and aligns with the extension of carer payments for young people up to 21 years of age residing in family based care.

Providing extended ambulance cover supports young people who have left care with their health and wellbeing, and is another way DCP is actively pursuing opportunities to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people in care, and post care, as part of *Investing in their future*.

For further information about ambulance cover eligibility and how to make a claim, visit the online hub: childprotection.sa.gov.au/iitf



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