

Fact Sheet

Next Step Plus – Supporting Young People's Transition from Care

Enhancing Transition from Care Services across Queensland

Under the *Child Protection Act 1999*, the Queensland Government is responsible for ensuring support and assistance is available to assist a young people aged 15 to 25 years in their transition from care to adulthood.

Building on the success and learnings from the former Next Step After Care Program, the redesigned Next Step Plus commenced on 1 April 2020.

Next Step Plus' vision is that all young people are resilient and supported, with the skills, capacity and capability to be the person they want to be.

Next Step Plus will assist young people in care from the age of 15 to develop the skills and knowledge they need to successfully transition from care to adulthood, and ensure those who have left care are able to receive tailored support, should they need it.

Next Step Plus involves:

- ▶ a partnership between government and non-government to provide information and support young people aged between 15 and 25 years who have been in care under a Child Protection Order made on or after their 12th birthday;
- ▶ a greater focus on transition planning with the young person and their Safety and Support Network, commencing from the age of 15;
- ▶ the identification by young people of those who provide natural supports to them and may wish to seek information and support to assist them in these roles;

- ▶ provision of a strong localised, place-based focus, which aims to promote greater continuity of support for young people to develop a more complete picture of their needs through routine and standardised information collection;
- ▶ building a young person's skills, knowledge and connections to assist them to achieve greater independence in adulthood and actively participate in society through employment and connection to community; and
- ▶ provision of more intensive support options for young people where their complex and multidimensional needs may be preventing them from having the capacity to learn these skills.

Next Step Plus Principles

- ▶ **Young people led:** Guided by the young person to promote self-determination.
- ▶ **Proactive:** Early and ongoing engagement opportunities.
- ▶ **Relationship and trust based:** Based on consistent and supportive relationships.
- ▶ **Trauma and developmentally informed and healing centric:** Recognising the impact of past events and history, focusing on healing.
- ▶ **Culturally responsive:** Service delivery will meet culturally unique needs.
- ▶ **Holistic:** Responding to a young person in their entirety.
- ▶ **Non-judgemental:** Accepting of a young person, their decision and voice.
- ▶ **"No wrong door":** An integrated approach with a network of providers working together to get a young person the support they need.

The Natural Mentor

A network of supportive relationships is a critical factor in achieving positive outcomes for young people leaving care.

Supportive relationships are those which are established and maintained organically, are authentic in nature and mutual. This organic method of establishing relationships is not always available to young people in care.

Next Step Plus offers a solution with the identification of a **natural mentor**. The natural mentor is a person or people identified by the young person as being a key support in their life.

The natural mentor is an informal role, walking alongside the young person through their transition from care, providing stability and continuity throughout the journey, and advocating for their needs.

The natural mentor may receive information and support to link the young person into the broader service system, where appropriate, and help them build the skills and knowledge they require to be independent. The mentor may also provide emotional support, which can assist young people to build their own social networks, thus increasing confidence and feelings of security.

Eligibility

To be eligible for Next Step Plus, a young person must be aged between 15 and 25 years, and be in or have been in care under a child protection order made on or after their 12th birthday.

Young people may access Next Step Plus directly themselves, or their Child Safety Officer may invite Next Step Plus to be involved in transition from care planning.

Support Phases

The Next Step Plus program comprises two phases – **Transition Phase** and **Future Phase**.

The **Transition Phase** largely remains the responsibility of Child Safety, supporting

young people who are 15-18 years old and still in the care of the department.

Activities include:

- ▶ holistic, ongoing strengths and needs assessments across all of the life domains;
- ▶ transition planning to help support identified needs and build life skills;
- ▶ supporting the young person to identify a natural mentor.

The **Future Phase** is led by funded Next Step Plus providers, supporting young people who are 18 to 25 years of age and have been in care under a child protection order made on or after their 12th birthday. Young people can be referred to Next Step Plus upon leaving care or engage directly with providers after they have transitioned from care.

The Future Phase provides tailored support as and when it is needed. It includes two streams which young people can move between:

- ▶ **Universal** – practical, educative and relationship based support which may be offered to all young people, when needed.
- ▶ **Enhanced** – intensive case management, which may be offered to those young people with more complex and interconnected needs which are reducing their capacity to develop the skills, knowledge and connections required to live independently.

Intensive case management may include:

- ▶ holistic strengths and needs assessments;
- ▶ emergency support (including brokerage), referral and counselling;
- ▶ linking to community groups and activities;
- ▶ intensive case management support and capacity building.