

# Staying On

# Home Stretch

WA

Guide for Carers and Young People  
to access Staying On



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**

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## Acknowledgements

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We acknowledge Aboriginal people as the Traditional Custodians of this land. We pay our respects to their strength, cultural resilience and the Elders past and present.



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## Introduction

The Staying On guide is for young people and their family or foster carers to help understand one element of the Home Stretch WA service offer, the opportunity for a young person to be financially supported to stay on with a family or foster carer after they reach 18 years old till they reach 21.

Home Stretch WA provides young people with access to an enhanced range of resources and supports from the age of 18 to the age of 21.

The guide provides information about what 'Staying On' is and how it works. It answers frequently asked questions to help people decide whether Staying On might work for them.

From 1 July 2022, young people who turn 18 will be able to register for the Home Stretch WA service. Once a Home Stretch WA provider is established in each area, young people are offered the choice to sign up to receive the full service offer including the Staying On Subsidy package.

For more information about the availability of Staying On in your area, please speak to your local district office of Department of Communities.



**The Staying On Agreement  
allowed me to feel more like  
one of the family and like I have  
a place to be after turning 18.**

Young person in Home Stretch WA

## What is Staying On?

Staying On gives young people and their family or foster carers the opportunity to be supported to continue a living arrangement up to the age of 21.

For young people it means they do not have to leave their carer's home until they reach 21, or when they are ready to move on.

For 'Staying On' carers it means they can be financially supported to have the young person stay with them until they turn 21 years old.

Many young people have already been 'staying on' in the past if it is in the young person's interest and the carer and young person want it to happen. Staying On is about supporting this period to be successful.

### Quick Facts

- Financial support extends to the living arrangement for a young person up to 21.
- A Staying On Agreement must be made between the young person and carer.
- A Staying On Subsidy is paid to the carer, with an agreed co-contribution from the young person.

## Will Staying On be a good option for you and your carer?

Staying On needs to be a choice that is made between the young person and their carer.

Conversations about leaving care and plans for housing can be worrying for some young people, so it is important the benefits and changes Staying On might bring are safely and respectfully explored between the carer and young person.

For many people, it is about making sure the expectations of each other are clear and a plan to make it work is created. For others it might mean creating some 'House Rules' for how things need to work.

Every Staying On arrangement is different, all involve support to create a Staying On Agreement (see page 14, What is a Staying On Agreement?).

Sometimes Staying On may not be possible or the right choice. The young person must always be supported to understand all their options to decide on the one that best fits their situation.

## Does the carer still receive a payment?

Yes, the Staying On carer receives a regular payment for as long as the young person is living with them (until they turn 21).

The Staying On Subsidy is different to a foster care subsidy. The expectation is the young person pays for some of their personal costs and may contribute to household costs. This is because from 18 years the young person is on an independent income either through employment or income support payments from Centrelink (such as the Youth Allowance).

Part of working out the Staying On Agreement, is figuring out together how much the young person pays to support the living arrangement.



## Why is a young person expected to contribute to costs?

Home Stretch WA is built around the idea of supporting and empowering young people to take charge and responsibility for their own lives. This means young people are asked to invest in themselves – building their skills, knowledge and capacity.

While the Staying On subsidy provides some financial support to the carer, the goal is to prepare young people to be able to manage their finances and budget for their own housing costs in the future.

Asking young adults to 'chip in' towards costs is also consistent with expert parenting advice given to parents with adult children living at home.

## How much is the Staying On Subsidy?

The Staying On Subsidy is paid directly to the carer. The subsidy is to support some of the costs of a young person continuing to stay on in the living arrangement. It is a single fortnightly payment.

The rate is reviewed every 12 months and the amount is reduced each year. The expectation is the Staying On Subsidy decreases, the young persons' contribution increases. This helps the young person prepare for paying for their own housing costs in the future.

In the second year, the Staying On Subsidy is reduced to 75% of the base rate subsidy amount and in the third year, it is reduced to 50%.

As of 1 July 2022, these fortnightly rates apply:

Year 1 - \$450 (base rate)

Year 2 - \$337.50 (75% of base rate)

Year 3 - \$225 (50% of base rate)

### **Example:**

Chris is 17 ½ years old and has been living with his carer, Aunt Laura, since he was 12. Chris is currently receiving the independent rate of Youth Allowance (around \$530 per fortnight) as he is in the CEO's care and is living in a foster care placement. Chris does not contribute towards any household costs.

The Home Stretch WA provider Transition Coach (or caseworker if a provider is not in place in the region) works with Chris and Laura to develop a Staying On Agreement prior to Chris turning 18. The Transition Coach (or caseworker), Chris and Laura look at what Chris can contribute to the living arrangement over the next 12 months and come to an agreement.

Chris has never had to think about paying for housing costs before and gets help to create a budget from his Transition Coach (or caseworker). Together they work out what he can afford to contribute as part of the Staying On Agreement. They work out he can start by contributing towards the family internet bill (\$10 per week) and pay for his own phone credit (\$20 per week). Chris is also going to continue to pay for personal costs, such as outings with friends and fashion clothing items.

When Chris turns 19, he has a part time job. Chris offers to pay \$60 per week towards household costs and continues to pay towards the family internet bill. He pays his own personal bills, but the subsidy helps to cover some household costs.

Before Chris turns 20, he starts working full time and decides to move out with his partner. They find a place together and apply for the Home Stretch WA 'Housing Allowance' to help make the shared housing affordable. The Staying On Subsidy payments stop when Chris moves out.

## Are there any exemptions from reducing the payment?

In circumstances where there is severe financial hardship or a young person's full time education or training commitments limit their capacity to contribute to household costs, an exemption from payment reduction can be requested. These are considered as part of the annual review process of the Staying On Agreement.



## What does the subsidy pay for?

The subsidy is a payment made directly to the carer to support the young person to continue living with them up to the age of 21. It's not a payment to increase or supplement a young person's income.

The subsidy is paid to help ensure the young person's basic needs can be met, and to support the family to be able to continue to provide a home for the young person.

Though every home is different, it is generally expected the subsidy covers things like:

- Food
- Accommodation (in the home)
- Utility bills including WiFi

It might be used to pay for other things on occasion, but that is decided each time between the young person and their Staying On carer.

Where it is agreed as part of the Staying On Agreement, the subsidy might cover things like:

- Transport costs
- Family outings/entertainment
- Incidental expenses related to education, training or employment
- Haircuts
- Personal health items such as contraceptive products or hygiene items
- Gym or recreation memberships
- Basic clothing items

## What does the young person pay for?

By the time the young person reaches the age of 18, they should have a form of income such as Youth Allowance (independent rate), Disability Support Pension or employment.

If the young person does not have any income, relevant Services Australia (Centrelink) support payments need to be applied for. It is important, the young person is responsible for paying their own costs and contributing to the living arrangement.

Chipping in is about young people investing in themselves and building their skills, knowledge and capacity. Though every situation is different, it is generally expected the young person pays for things like:

- Fashion clothing items
- Fuel in their own car
- Transport costs
- Personal outings such as festivals, concerts or movies with friends
- Personal styling products
- Video games
- Phone credit
- Food for the house/takeaway

Chipping in doesn't always have to be financial, it could be helping with the chores or learning how much the bills are every month, so young people are ready when they move out.



## How long can a young person Stay On for?

The length of time a young person can Stay On is agreed by the young person and carer. Generally speaking, a Staying On Agreement covers more than a few months.

The Staying On Subsidy is paid until the young person reaches 21. Ending the agreement is a decision that either the young person or carer can make at any time. If the young person and carer decide to continue the living arrangement after 21, that is entirely up to them.



## How is this different from a foster placement for a young person?

When a young person turns 18, two significant things happen:

1. The young person's care order finishes and the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Communities is no longer the legal guardian.
2. The young person is legally an adult. The young person no longer has a caseworker and many of the supports provided by the Department of Communities ends.

The young person is eligible for income support payments from Centrelink to help with study, undertake training or look for work. The Department has a responsibility to support eligible young people who have left care, and are less than 25 years of age, to access a range of services and supports, some of which may be outlined in their Leaving Care Plan.

Turning 18 years old means the young person is now legally an adult and can purchase alcohol, gamble, get married and apply for financial credit. Additionally, any matters relating to the justice system is going to be dealt through the adult legal system.

**The payment helps. It covers the household bills and living costs, she also contributes to costs so it works well.**

Carer in Home Stretch WA



## How is this different from a foster placement for a young person?

### Foster Care

The young person is under 18 years old and looked after (i.e., in care).

The young person may be placed in a foster care arrangement.

A care plan sets out the young person's care needs and how they are going to be supported in the care arrangement.

The Department of Communities is the young person's guardian and the main support.

The Department of Communities pays a subsidy to the carer (foster care subsidy) for the care of the young person and assists with the costs of other things.

A foster carer receives additional money to assist the young person in care to cover other expenses such as clothing and education expenses not covered by the subsidy.

The young person does not need a Working with Children Check.

### Staying On

The young person is an adult (over 18) and has left care.

The young person has left care, it is a Staying On Agreement.

The young person and carer create a Staying On Agreement with the help of the caseworker to agree on how things should work.

The Department of Communities is no longer the guardian, and the young person does not have a caseworker. They can access support from the Department until 25 years of age.

The young person has an income and contributes to the costs of Staying On. The Department of Communities helps by paying a Staying On Subsidy to the Staying On carer.

As the young person has left care, they are responsible for their expenses. They have access to support from the Department of Communities until 25 and the Home Stretch WA Transition Coach (where a provider is in place in the region) to access the Invest in Me Fund for certain expenses.

The young person may need a Working with Children Check if the Staying On carer is fostering other children.

## What placements are covered by Staying On?

Staying On can only be applied to family and foster care arrangements where a young person is living in the placement when they turn 18. The care arrangement (placement) must be endorsed by the Department of Communities or a Community Service Organisation foster care agency.

The carer must agree to the plan for the young person to Stay On, and it must not be against the young person's wishes or against their best interests to remain there.

It is important the young person makes the decision to Stay On. Staying On can also support a young person to return to a previous carer who has been an approved foster carer with the Department of Communities or a Community Service Organisation.



## What about other care arrangements?

Under Home Stretch WA, young people who are in residential care, supported housing or other living arrangements are unable to apply for the Staying On Subsidy.

The Housing Allowance component of Home Stretch WA is being rolled out across the State incrementally, commencing in the second half of 2022. Young people in other care arrangements have access to the Housing Allowance offering as it is available in their district or region.

In the meantime, young people can get support from their Department of Communities caseworker to look at independent living arrangement options for when they leave care.

## What is a Staying On Agreement?

The Staying On Agreement is important, to ensure everyone is clear about how things work after a young person leaves care at 18 and continues to stay on with the carer. An agreement helps set out how things are going to work for the young person and carer. It is not a care plan, but an agreement between the young person and carer.

An agreement works out any 'house rules' and expectations of living together, and how the young person contributes to the house now they are an adult. In some cases, where the young person and carer have been living together for a long time, issues like coming home on time, having friends over or staying away overnight may have been sorted out. So, the agreement may not need much detail.

In other cases, there may be some real concerns about things like safety, and so there may need to be a discussion and agreement about how many nights the young person can spend out and whether the police are contacted if the young person goes missing.

A Staying On Agreement needs to be in place, regardless of how long the young person has been living in the placement.

## What is decided in a Staying On Agreement?

Every Staying On Agreement is different. The Home Stretch WA Transition Coach (where a provider is in place) or Department of Communities caseworker helps to ensure the Staying On Agreement makes sense to the young person and carer.

Some issues that may come up:

- Does the young person need to let the carer know if they are staying out and who with?
- How does having a partner or friends staying overnight work?
- Does there need to be an agreement about the carer going into the young person's room?
- Smoking/alcohol - Can the young person drink or smoke in the house?
- What expectations are there about cleaning and household chores?
- What happens if the carer goes away for a month?
- Is the young person going to have a house key? If not, why not? What needs to happen for it to be agreed?
- What happens if there is an emergency after hours?

## What if things go wrong or the Agreement doesn't work?

A vital part of Staying On working well, is for the young person and carer to feel safe to communicate how things are going with each other, and work through any problems.

That means they can ask for the Staying On Agreement to be reviewed. The young person can ask the Transition Coach (or a Department of Communities Child Protection Worker) for help to figure out how to deal with any problems that arise and work out how to make things right. The carer can contact the Transition Coach (or Department of Communities District Office) if they have any concerns about how things are going.

If it is not working out, the young person is supported by the Transition Coach (or Department of Communities District Office) to explore housing options to better fit their needs.

Moving out doesn't mean the the carer and young person relationship must end, though the carer is no longer paid the Staying On Subsidy.

## The Staying On journey

### **AWARENESS**

Find out about Staying On

### **MAKE AN AGREEMENT**

Work out a Staying On Agreement

### **APPLICATION**

Apply for the Staying On Subsidy

### **PAYMENT**

Receive the Staying On Subsidy

### **REVIEW**

Review how things are going

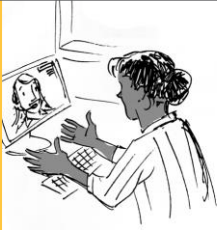
### **EXIT**

Staying On finishes when the young person turns 21 or decide to move on

## AWARENESS Finding out about Staying On

### IDENTIFY YOUNG PEOPLE

This starts at least 6 months before you turn 18



Case Worker/s identify young people in stable & safe living arrangements who are leaving care in the next 6 months

### FIND OUT ABOUT HOME STRETCH WA



Case worker discusses Home Stretch WA with the young person & carer

Check Out: Home Stretch WA Flyer for Young People & Staying On Guide for Carers & Young People

### MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

Helps you make a decision about Staying On



Young person & carer organise to meet with the Home Stretch WA Coach

### DISCUSSION

The Coach explains Home Stretch WA & the option to be supported to Stay On, they are given info & how Staying On Agreements work



## MAKING AN AGREEMENT Working out how Staying On works for you

### DECISION TO STAY ON

If you agree to Stay On let's do some planning



Young person & carer agree the young person can 'Stay On' in the living arrangement

### SMOOTH TRANSITION OF CARER SUPPORTS

The Staying On Facilitator works with the carers' support circle to smoothly transition support to Home Stretch WA, they agree on how things might work to support a carer with other children in the living arrangement



Check Out: Staying On Facilitator- Role in Onboarding, Setting up a Staying On Agreement, Discussion Guide & Staying On Agreement Template

### PREPARE AGREEMENT

We can help you make an agreement



The Transition Coach supports the young person to work out how things might be different after 18, the Home Stretch WA Staying On Facilitator supports the carer to do the same

### STAYING ON AGREEMENT

Young person & carer are supported to negotiate a Staying On Agreement, the Home Stretch WA Staying On Facilitator facilitates the process



## APPLICATION Applying for the Staying On Subsidy

### SUBSIDY APPLICATION

With the agreement done, now you can apply for the subsidy



Coach helps the young person & carer submit the subsidy application paperwork for approval

### SUBSIDY APPROVAL



Carer & young person receive call/email /SMS notification of Staying On Subsidy approval

## PAYMENT Getting Paid

### SUBSIDY PAYMENT

Let's check to make sure you are getting paid & things are OK



After 18 the carer receives the Staying On payment, & the young person makes their agreed contribution

## REVIEW Your First Review

### 4 WEEK REVIEW



Young Person and Carer meet with the Staying On Facilitator and Coach to check in and tweak the agreement

**REVIEW** Ongoing to make sure things are still OK, report changes, review the agreement & subsidy

**CHECK IN (Ongoing)**

We keep in contact & provide support when needed

Young person meets with the Transition Coach monthly to report any changes, they also offer more intensive support to the young person

Staying On Facilitator checks in every 3 months or as agreed with the carer



**REPORT CHANGES**



The young person lets the Transition Coach know if things change, the carer can call the Staying On Facilitator to let them know how things are going

**AGREEMENT REVIEW**

We review your agreement & subsidy each year

If things change, the young person or carer can ask to review the agreement; if it's time to move on, the Coach can help the young person with housing options



**SUBSIDY REVIEW**

The young person & carer meet with the Staying On Facilitator & Coach to review the subsidy agreement 3 months before it ends, they check the long-term plan & make sure the family is prepared for the reduced payment



**EXIT** Young person turns 21 or decides to move on

**FINAL REVIEW**

We start planning early so you have time

When they turn 20, the young person and carer meet with the Staying On Facilitator & Coach to work out what happens after 21



**MOVING ON**

The subsidy payment ends at 21 & the young person follows their housing pathway, there is an opportunity to celebrate & reflect on the Staying On period



Staying On finishes when you turn 21 or move on





### How do I get more information about Staying On?

For more information about Staying On and setting up an agreement, speak with your Department of Communities Case Worker or District Office,

