



### Introduction

This resource outlines the supports in schools for **all** children in out of home care (court ordered). It includes Government, Catholic & Independent schools.

The "Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment: Partnering Agreement" has more information about these supports. It includes the requirements & responsibilities for all partners to the agreement.

[PartneringAgreement.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](#)

### Principles

- culture is prioritised for Aboriginal children & young people
- trauma responsive practices that
  - ✓ understand the impact of negative events in childhood
  - ✓ consider intergenerational trauma
- support children to participate in decision making & actions that affect their lives

### LOOKOUT Centres

The LOOKOUT Centres build the capacity of **all** schools (including Catholic & Independent Schools) to support learning for children in care. There are 4 LOOKOUT Centres in Victoria. One Centre for each Education region. They have a team of staff based in Melbourne & the regions. Each LOOKOUT Centre has a Koorie Cultural Advisor. Other staff include the Principal, Learning & Early Childhood Learning Advisors & other specialist staff. **For more information:** [LOOKOUT Education Support Centres](#)

### Designated Teachers

Every school has a designated teacher. They are responsible for making sure that the right supports are in place at school for children in care. They are a champion for the young person. The LOOKOUT Centres provide training for Designated Teachers.

### Starting a new school

Sometimes children change schools when they enter care or change placement. It is important that children start at a new school quickly. This supports the child or young person to stay connected to learning. The school can also provide stability & routine during a time of change.

- Usually children attend the closest school to their placement. 'Find my School' is helpful to find this school. [Find my School](#)
- Children do better with fewer changes of school. Sometimes it is helpful for the young person to continue at their current school where they have supports, networks & friends.
- Sometimes the closest school is not the best option for the child. Your regional **LOOKOUT Centre** can help with any difficulties with enrolment in the most suitable school.
- It is important to advise the school principal in writing that the child is in out-of-home-care
- The parent or guardian gives consent for the enrolment. Consent arrangements vary depending on the court order. Talk to the Child protection case manager if you are unsure. Make sure the school knows who gives consent for camps & excursions (this may be different to who gives consent to enrolment)
- Add the details of the school including the year level to CRIS (Looking after Children: Client Information System). This helps the LOOKOUT Centre & others follow the child's educational journey.

## Learning Mentors

The Learning Mentor is a teacher or staff member in the school. It may take about a term to choose a learning mentor. This allows time to get to know the student & find the best person. In smaller schools, Learning Mentors may have another role\*. The student is part of choosing their Learning Mentor. The Learning Mentor

- builds a strong relationship with the student
- helps them feel safe, supported & connected
- offers support & guidance to the student
- ensures the student's voice is heard in planning.

\*It is important that the Learning Mentor is not the first contact for discipline issues.

## Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESO)

KESOs are based in each Educational region. They are members of the Aboriginal community. Their overall role is to support engagement & better outcomes for Aboriginal children & young people. It's helpful to have the KESO in the first student support group. [Contact a Koorie education coordinator | Victorian Government \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au)

## Student Support Groups (SSG) /Program Support Group (PSG) in Catholic Schools

The Student Support Group brings together the people who are supporting the student. It is one of the ways of sharing information. Every student in out of home care has a Student Support Group. The school organises & leads the Student Support Group. The group

- focuses on strengths
- plans & supports the **education & wellbeing** of the student
- identifies any changes (adjustments) needed
- follows up supports & reviews the progress of the student
- develops the Individual Education Plan



### Frequency

- meets each term
- the first meeting occurs in the first week of the enrolment or entering out-of-home-care (if the school stays the same). Talk to the school about **inviting the KESO** to the first SSG.

### Key Members & Responsibilities

- principal (or representative)
  - ✓ organises & chairs the meetings, including minute taking & distribution.
- teacher: who works most closely with the student e.g. classroom teacher, home room teacher
  - ✓ has information about the student's participation & progress
- carer
  - ✓ understands current stresses, daily routines & what helps the child
- parent (if safe & appropriate)
  - ✓ including the parent can be helpful when working towards re-unification
- case manager (or another advocate) to support the carer & student
  - ✓ supports coordination between the Care team & Educational team
  - ✓ advocates on behalf of the child/young person & the carer
- student (where the child/young person is comfortable to attend)
  - ✓ it's important that the child's voice is part of the SSG. Think about ways to include their views, even when they prefer not to attend the group.

## Questions to ask in an SSG

- What is working well in the classroom?
- How are they going with making friends?
- What's their favourite subject?
- What extra supports are in place?

For more information: [Student Support Groups: Guidance | education.vic.gov.au](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)

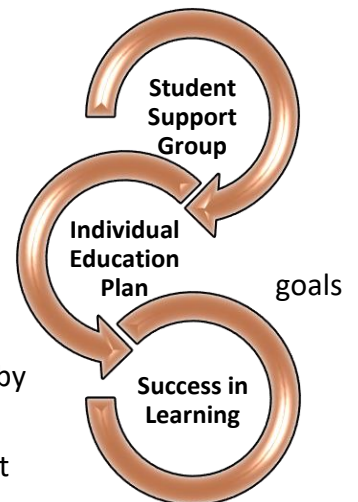
## Individual Education Plan (IEP)\*

This plan guides the strategies & education program to help the child or young person with their learning. Each child in care must have a current IEP.

*\*Personalised Learning Plan in Catholic Schools. Independent schools will have similar planning processes.*

### Key Points

- The starting point for the IEP is understanding the student including
  - ✓ strengths & interests
  - ✓ current skills & learning level
  - ✓ challenges & barriers
  - ✓ cultural & social background.
- Ask the student & carer what helps them learn
- An IEP includes long term goals (e.g. by the end of the year) & short term (What they will achieve this term)
- Include activities to support cultural connections in the IEP e.g. using books by Aboriginal authors to support literacy development.
- Regular review of the IEP is important to check progress towards the student goals & update strategies & supports (every 6 months)
- The child's previous school is responsible for forwarding the IEP to a new school.
- The current IEP is given to the Carer, the Case Manager working most closely with the child (e.g. Contracted Case Manager) & sometimes the parent. Add the IEP/ILP to CRIS/CRISSP.



For more information: [Policy | education.vic.gov.au](https://www.education.vic.gov.au)

**The Student Support Group & the Individual Education Plan work together to support the student**

## Other Meetings

**Parent/Teacher interview:** All schools have parent/teacher meetings to talk about the child's progress. Some schools use Student Led Conferences. The student leads the Student Led Conference. They present their work & guide the discussion. The teacher facilitates the discussion

**Professionals meeting:** A meeting of all professionals involved with the student to share information e.g. Case Manager, Child Protection, Wellbeing staff, Allied health professionals. Sometimes the carer is part of this meeting. Other times, the carer does not attend.

**Care Team meeting:** Every child in out-of-home-care has a care team who meet regularly. The care team includes the people who jointly care for the child while they are in care. It is important for the school & care team to work together to support the child. The case manager &/or child protection organises the care team meeting.

**It is important to be clear about the purpose of the meeting. This includes responsibility for taking minutes, organising & inviting participants.**

## Educational Needs Analysis

An Educational Needs Analysis (ENA) is a deeper dive into the student's individual learning needs.

### When

- All students who have been in out-of-home-care for a period of three months or longer. Or sooner if needed.

### How

- The Principal (or their delegate) & the school makes the referral for an ENA with \*Student Support Services & begins to gather the initial information.

*\*Student Support Services (SSS) are based in each region. They have specialist staff including psychologists, speech pathologists & social workers.*

**What:** An ENA looks at all the current information about the child. It helps to understand what they need to do well with education. It includes family situation, personal history, learning, social & emotional wellbeing, culture & development. The Educational Needs Analysis looks at the child's current needs. It is also considers their future needs and guides their learning.



**How:** The initial information is gathered & provided to Student Support Services including:

- Family & Care Story e.g. family, current living arrangement, history of care
- Identity & culture e.g. Mob, Country, family contacts & significant relationships
- Educational e.g. school reports, attendance & enrolment history, testing results
- Social & Emotional e.g. peer relationships, interests & hobbies
- Health & Medical e.g. asthma, health checks, development, Paediatrician
- Any other reports/assessments e.g. Speech Pathology
- Information from other people supporting the child e.g. mental health clinician/allied health

### What happens next

- The Student Support Services team considers the information to decide the need for more assessments or information.
- Some students do not need any more assessment. Others may need extra assessment through the education department or referrals to other services e.g. Paediatrician, Allied Health
- An ENA Student Support Group is held with Student Support Services & the regular Student Support Group members. This meeting considers the needs of the student based on all the information

**For more information see:** [Policy](#) | [education.vic.gov.au](http://education.vic.gov.au)

## What to do if there is a problem

- Start by speaking to the child’s teacher
- Consider asking about priority referral to School based mental health & wellbeing services
- Follow up with the Principal, Delegate or Designated Teacher if you need more support
- Contact your regional LOOKOUT centre if needed. Especially for difficulties attending school, problems with enrolment, frequent suspensions, and modified programs.

**LOOKOUT Contacts:** LOOKOUT staff check the emails daily & forward the email to a LOOKOUT staff member to respond.

### South Western Victoria Region

- Includes South West Wimmera, Central Highlands, Barwon
- Principal: Andrew Kohane
- Email: lookout.swv@education.vic.gov.au

### North Western Victoria Region

- Includes Loddon, Campaspe, Mallee
- Principal: Marise Boff
- Email: lookout.nwv@education.vic.gov.au

### South Eastern Victoria Region

- Includes Southern Metro, Inner & Outer Gippsland
- Principal: Murray Geddes
- Email: lookout.sev@education.vic.gov.au

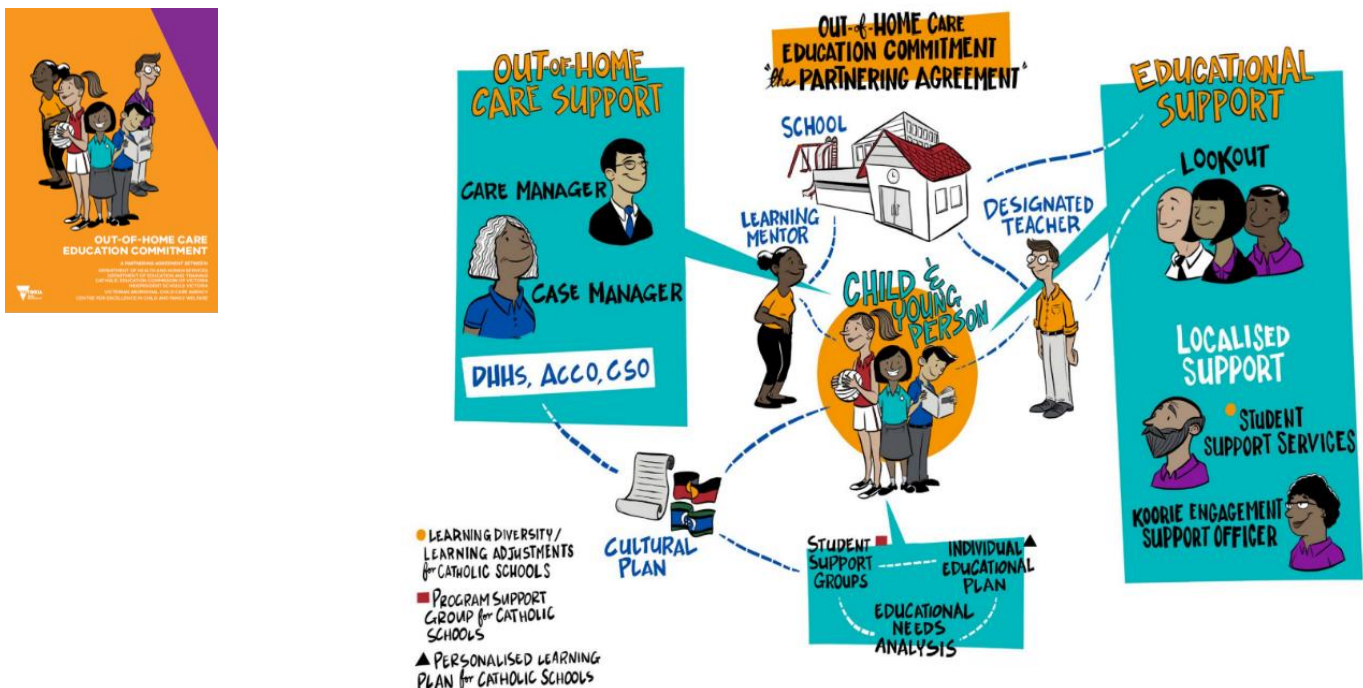
### North Eastern Victoria Region

- Includes Goulburn & Ovens Valley
- Principal: David Rose
- Email: lookout.nev@education.vic.gov.au

For more information: [Complaints Quick Reference Guide QRG.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://education.vic.gov.au/complaints-quick-reference-guide)

## Partnering Agreement

The key groups that support children in statutory out-of-home care came together to ‘outline the “requirements & responsibilities” to support success in learning for children in care. The Partnering Agreement strengthens the shared commitment between partners to improve education & health & wellbeing outcomes for children & young people in” out-of-home-care<sup>1</sup>.



1. *Out of Home Care Education Commitment: A partnering agreement. Published by the ‘Early Childhood & School Education Group, Department of Education & Training, Youth & Families Division, Department of Health & Human Services. July 2018.*

For more information: [PartneringAgreement.pdf \(education.vic.gov.au\)](https://education.vic.gov.au/partnering-agreement)