# SEcure Care Services: Key Actions for Schools

This document summaries key actions for schools to support students re-engaging with their education after a placement in Secure Care Services.

## Secure Care Services

### Supporting young people exiting from Secure Care Service

Students who experience placement in Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Secure Care Service are young people who are at high risk in the community and have often experienced significant trauma. Most live in out-of-home care. Secure Care Service is an out-of-home care service and is part of the child protection system – not the youth justice system. Secure Care is a support service and is not related to a young person committing a crime.

These key actions align with Department of Education and Training’s (DET) general policies, advice and guidance about student engagement and students at risk of disengagement. These actions are also informed by DET's policy and guidance that recognises the need for additional school supports for vulnerable students who are in out-of-home care (details in the [Policy and Advisory Library](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy)).

Evidence shows that engagement and achievement in education is an important protective factor for these young people. Importantly the evidence also shows that engagement is driven through strong, caring, and empathetic relationships with educators.

The checklist of actions is designed to ensure that every student exiting Secure Care is re-engaged in education in a safe and supported way that minimises disruption to their learning.

## Checklist of Key Actions

When advised that a student has been placed in Secure Care Services schools should make sure the following actions are completed:

| Checklist of Key Actions |  |
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| Engage with the student and their Care Team/family | The school should advise the designated teacher that the student has been in Secure Care and then contact the student and their care team/family, highlighting that:* you look forward to seeing the student back at school as soon as they are ready
* you are aware that the student has been at Secure Care Services and that information was provided to you to enable additional supports to be put in place for their return to school
* you will ensure that this information is treated sensitively and respect the student’s right to privacy
* you will provide additional assistance to the student to help them reconnect with school. Enquire of the student and care team what possible adjustments may be needed to support their return.
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| **Assign a designated teacher** | The designated teacher provides a coordinating role for all young people in out-of-home care in a school. Their key responsibilities are:* provide an extra level of advocacy for students in out-of-home care
* play an oversight role to ensure key supports are in place
* make sure students in out-of-home care have a student support group, an individual education plan and get enough support.
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| **Convene a Student Support Group** | The Student Support Group (SSG) brings together people responsible for the wellbeing and education of the student in out-of-home care. A SSG is held every term but more often when needed, such as when a student exits Secure Care. The SSG meetings will:* be strengths based, student focused and culturally safe – regularly seeking student and parent/carer input
* develop an individual education plan for the student
* organize an Educational Needs Analysis
* check the student’s progress and review goals and actions regularly.
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| **Appoint a learning mentor** | A learning mentor is a nominated staff member who provides key support to a student in out-of-home care while they are at school. Their key responsibilities are to:* support the educational needs and cultural safety of their allocated student
* help the student to stay connected to school
* support them to overcome barriers in their learning
* act as a role model, guide and advocate for the student
* get to know them well and take an interest in their life and learning.
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| **Provide regular check-ins** | It is important the school stays in contact with the student and check in with them regularly. Students in out-of-home care or who have been in Secure Care Services will be best served when school staff, such as the learning mentor or designated teacher:* maintain a consistent, reliable and secure relationship with the student
* follow through on their commitments to the student
* take an interest in the student’s life, their circumstances and their connections to community and culture outside of school.
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## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Secure Care Service?

Secure Care Service is an out-of-home care service and is part of the child protection system – not the youth justice system. Secure Care is a support service and is not related to a young person committing a crime. There are two Secure Care Services in Victoria – one for young people who predominantly identify as males and one for young people who predominantly identify as female – each with a maximum capacity of 10 children and young people.

### When can a placement be considered?

Placement at a secure care service may be considered where:

* a child or young person (aged 10-17 years) is at substantial and immediate risk of harm
* a placement in a secure setting provides the only suitable option for ensuring the child or young person's safety and wellbeing.

In exceptional circumstances children under the age of 10 years may be admitted to a secure care service. There are additional approvals and safeguards required for this to happen.

As a Secure Care placement involves a restriction of a child or young person's liberty, it may only be used where all other placement and support options have been considered and cannot provide adequate protection from significant harm.

### How long will a student be in Secure Care?

A placement at a Secure Care Service may only be for a maximum continuous period of 21 days. In exceptional circumstances this can be extended for a further 21 days. There are approximately 490 admissions to Secure Care Services each year. Of the young people who are admitted, approximately 50 have multiple visits.

### What happens in Secure Care?

Children and young people entering Secure Care are provided with an initial health screening within 24 hours of admission and then provided with medical care, including mental health support services. Parkville College, a registered government school, has a campus in each of the two Secure Care Services that provides education and supports and works closely with the child protection service system. Parkville College provides education six days a week Mondays- Saturdays during a placement. Teachers at Secure Care:

* Provide education in a culturally safe and therapeutic learning environment characterised by strong, secure relationships
* Assess individual student learning needs and deliver literacy, hospitality, art and music classes
* Plan for the student’s transition out of Secure Care and provide a Student Report to the student’s school.

### What happens on exit from Secure Care?

The intention is that students return to life in the community as soon as possible. Almost all of the students exiting Secure Care return to an out-of-home care placement, and the majority of those are in residential care.

Given the nature of the issues that can lead to a Secure Care placement, it is important that young people receive appropriate assistance to engage with education, including the supports described in the [Out-of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement](https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/policy).

A Student Support Group meeting should be held as soon as possible, and an Educational Needs Analysis may need to be prioritised to ensure that appropriate supports are provided. These actions should be informed by the Student Report from Secure Care Services and by input from the student's child protection worker and broader care team.

**How will I know when a student has been in Secure Care Services?**

You will be contacted by Parkville College when the student exits Secure Care. You may also be contacted by the Area team or the LOOKOUT Centre in your region shortly after, to offer support. Sometimes schools will be notified while a student is still in Secure Care but usually you will be notified when the student exits Secure Care. This is due to the short nature of many Secure Care admissions.

## Key contacts and Supports

### Area Teams including Student Support Services (SSS)

Contact your local [Area](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/contact/Pages/regions.aspx) teams for support addressing complex barriers to engagement including assistance with assessments, referrals to services, developing Individual Education Plans, Behaviour Support Plans and Safety Plans.

### Navigator

Contact your local [Navigator Coordinator](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/behaviour/engagement/Pages/navigator.aspx) OR make an [online referral](https://deloitteau.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7QCoZH6fcMudGdf), to seek case management support if a young person is disengaging from education.

### LOOKOUT Education Support Centre

Contact your [LOOKOUT Centre](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/lookout.aspx) to support you in appointing a Designated Teacher and to help build your school's capacity to support young people in out-of-home care.

### Tiered interventions & supports

A [map](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/studentmanagement/Interventions-and-supports.pdf) of available tiered interventions & supports includes individual interventions for young people with complex barriers to engagement.



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