

# Partnering Agreement Overview | Case Managers

Out-Of-Home Care Education  
Commitment: A Partnering Agreement

The Centre respectfully acknowledges that we work on the traditional land of the Kulin Nation, and we acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land. We pay respect to Elders past, present and those of the future. We acknowledge that we work on stolen land that was never ceded.

We appreciate and celebrate diversity in all its forms. We believe diversity of all kids makes our teams, services, and organisation stronger and more effective.

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# Before you begin

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## Defining Out-of-Home-Care (OOHC)

Children in Out-of-Home-Care (OOHC) refers to children who are not living with their parents and are subject to child protection investigation, protective intervention, or a Children’s Court Order. Children may be in kinship, foster, residential, lead tenant or permanent care arrangements. In this document, we use the term ‘children in care’.

**Permanent Care Order:** Children who have been placed on a permanent care order within the last 12 months are entitled to supports detailed in the Partnering Agreement.

Excluded from this definition are children and young people who are in informal care, and who have transitioned from OOHC to adoption or family reunification.

## Different systems, different words:

The Partnering Agreement aims to support children in Government, Catholic and Independent schools. Different school systems use different terminology to describe some of the elements of support. Below is a quick guide to some of the terminology used:

Government Schools	Catholic Schools	Independent Schools
Student Support Group (SSG)	Program Support Group (PSG)	Independent schools must provide the same processes as Government and Catholic schools. However, they use different terminology across different schools. Contact the school principal or designated teacher for more details
Individual Education Plan (IEP)	Personalised Learning Plan (PLP)	
Educational Needs Analysis (ENA)	Same, <a href="#">see guidelines here</a>	
Student Support Services* (SSS)	Learning Diversity / Learning Adjustments	

### \*Student Support Services – Definition

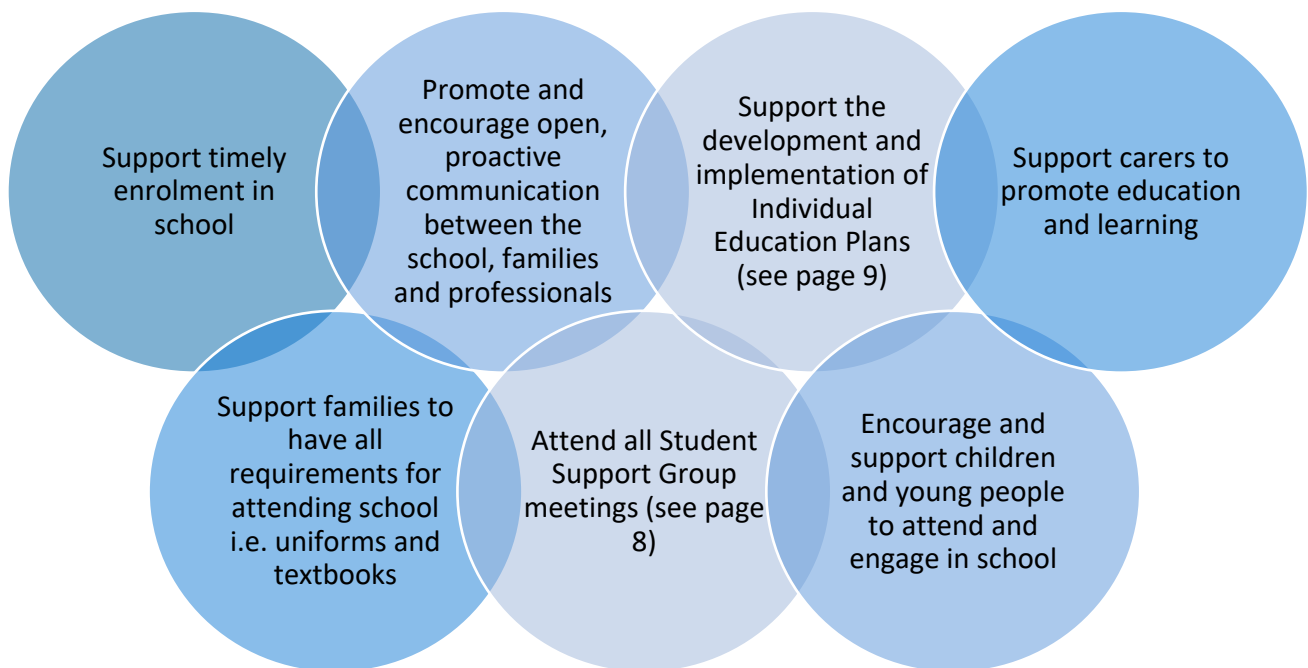
Student Support Services, sometimes called ‘triple ‘S’ or ‘SSS’ work in area-based, multidisciplinary teams. They are a broad range of professionals including social workers, psychologists, and speech pathologists, who work to provide integrated health and wellbeing, group and individual support, and school workforce capability building. They can support schools to develop reasonable adjustments, support students and families, and provide support following critical incidents in schools where appropriate. For more information, see the [DET website](#).

# Introduction

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This document outlines some of the structures in place to support children in care to access, engage with, and participate in education. These structures fall within an overarching policy framework. There may be additional strategies you can implement to encourage and support educational engagement for the children, young people, and families you work with.

Case managers can help support children in care with their education by doing the following:



Under the Out-Of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement (The Partnering Agreement, [see DET website](#)), all children in care are entitled to specific supports for their education. This document is designed to show how all aspects of the Partnering Agreement fit in with one another.

This is a guide for what you can expect for children when they are in primary / secondary school in the Government, Catholic and independent systems. You can use this document as a basis to advocate for the child and carer to receive appropriate support for the child's education.

Additional resources and further information are available on the Centre's website: [www.cfecfw.asn.au/education-resource-hub](http://www.cfecfw.asn.au/education-resource-hub)

# Out-Of-Home Care Education Commitment: A Partnering Agreement

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## What is the Partnering Agreement?

The Partnering Agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities for people supporting children in care. It was created to make sure everyone works together to provide appropriate supports to children in care for the best education, health, and wellbeing outcomes. As part of the Partnering Agreement, schools must do the following:

Assign a Learning Mentor

Run Student Support Groups, with regular meetings

Assist with a child's Individual Education Plan

Conduct an Educational Needs Analysis for the child

Appoint a Designated Teacher

## What is a LOOKOUT Centre?

LOOKOUT Centres are teams of experienced educators, support personnel and allied health staff led by a Principal who guide schools, child protection practitioners, contracted case managers and carers to support children in care to achieve the best educational outcomes.

LOOKOUT Centres have specialist roles: Koorie Cultural Advisors, Learning Advisors, Early Childhood Learning Advisors, Psychologists, Careers Advisors and specialist advisors.

LOOKOUT Learning Advisors can support schools to implement the Partnering Agreement, including processes and plans to support students, and support case managers and carers navigate the education system.

## When should you contact a LOOKOUT Centre?

Contact your local LOOKOUT Centre if you do not believe a school is providing the necessary supports for your child. Ideally, you should speak to the school's Principal first, to address any concerns you have. If you are not satisfied with the school's response, you can contact the LOOKOUT Centre in your region for information and advice.

For information or advice, contact the LOOKOUT Centre in your region:

South Western  
Victoria Region

[lookout.swv@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.swv@education.vic.gov.au)

South Eastern Victoria  
Region

[lookout.sev@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.sev@education.vic.gov.au)

North Western  
Victoria Region

[lookout.nwv@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.nwv@education.vic.gov.au)

North Eastern Victoria  
Region

[lookout.nev@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:lookout.nev@education.vic.gov.au)

# Roles in schools

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## Designated Teacher

Designated teachers take the lead responsibility within schools for children in care. All Government, Catholic and Independent schools must have a trained Designated Teacher. LOOKOUT Centres provide training to Designated Teachers, including training to support trauma-informed practice.

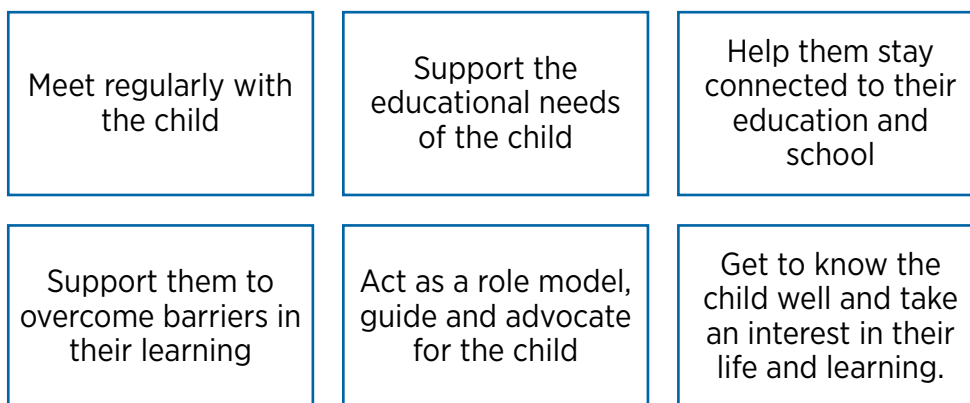
Designated Teachers advocate that each child in care has access to the following under the Partnering Agreement:

- Student Support Group
- Individual Education Plan
- Educational Needs Analysis
- A Learning Mentor.

The Designated Teacher is the key contact at the child's school for LOOKOUT, Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH) and other agencies involved with the child. They play an important role behind the scenes, with various administrative duties. This means they may not necessarily have a strong relationship with the child. You can contact the Designated Teacher for guidance regarding what supports are available for the child in their school, to raise concerns and share relevant information such as placement changes.

## Learning Mentor

Schools should provide the child with a Learning Mentor. Learning Mentors are a school staff member who can:



It is important the child is involved in identifying their Learning Mentor, with input from the principal and school staff. The relationship between the child and their Learning Mentor is key. The role a Learning Mentor holds within a school will vary, depending on their unique position. They may not necessarily be a teacher; they could be a wellbeing officer.

Learning Mentors provide the child with unconditional positive regard and should not play a disciplinary role in the child's education. They represent a significant adult for the child; someone the child has a good connection to, who helps them feel safe, and who has the skills to support them.

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For more information on LOOKOUT Centres and the Partnering agreements:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/resources>

# Student Support Group and Meetings

## WHY

- Student Support Group (SSG) meetings build and maintain connections between young people and families, support services and school staff
- To ensure the people with the most knowledge of the child work together to develop and work towards shared goals for the child's educational achievement.
- A chance to celebrate successes of the child, their carer, you and school.
- An opportunity to promote the student and carer voice

## WHO

- Everyone involved in the child's education can be invited to attend and contribute. Think about who are the most important people to be part of the meeting.
- For example: The child\*, their carer, their parent\*\*, you as their case manager, Koorie Engagement Support Officer, Psychologist, Child Protection, school staff
- Schools are responsible for scheduling, taking minutes and providing minutes to the SSG
- The child's carer is encouraged to bring an advocate or interpreter if required

## WHAT

- An SSG is distinct from a Care Team Meeting. The purpose of an SSG is to discuss education matters
- A team of people who support the child's education to:
  - Develop and review the child's Individual Education Plan, set expectations and goals for the child
  - Discuss and review Educational Needs Analysis

## WHEN

- An SSG should be arranged within one week of a young person entering care, changing care arrangements or commencing at a new school.
- SSG meetings should occur at least once per term. Extra meetings can be requested
  - Tip: Ask when the next meeting is, ask the school to schedule the next in advance
  - Tip: At the start of the meeting, confirm the purpose and who is taking minutes,
  - Tip: At the end of the meeting, confirm the actions and who will distribute minutes

## HOW

- Meetings might be held at school, online or in a culturally safe space
- Everyone is an expert in their area, including you, the child and the child's carer
- Everyone gets a chance to talk, including you, the child and their carer
- Focus on the child's strengths!
- Ask professionals to avoid using jargon so the child and carer understand all discussions

## HELP

- LOOKOUT Staff are available to support in more complex cases
- Contact your local Learning Advisor for additional guidance on SSGs
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/student-support-groups/resources>

\*The child may attend where appropriate. At times, they may not want to go or may not want to stay for the whole meeting. It is important that their voice and views are promoted regardless of their presence. Consider how you can seek their views prior to the meeting

\*\*The child's birth parent(s) may attend meetings where appropriate. It is recommended to advise the school if this is safe and practical to invite parents to meetings, considering court orders and the child's views.



# Individual Education Plan

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## WHY

- Children in care often need additional, tailored support and strategies to engage in school and learning.
- An Individual Education Plan (IEP) outlines what support, strategies, goals, targets and adjustments the child may require, and ensures relevant staff are aware of how best to support the child for their engagement in learning and education

## WHO

- Every child in care must have an IEP
- The SSG is responsible for developing, agreeing, implementing and monitoring the IEP
- An IEP should be shared by the school with the case manager and care manager, and recorded on CRIS and CRISSP

## WHAT

- An IEP is a detailed document used to outline how to support and ensure successful educational engagement for a child
- Suggestion: There may be two short term goals (within the school term) supporting a long term (longer than a school term) goal for the child's education It is an opportunity to demonstrate the child's strengths, and encourage them to set high aspirations and expectations.

## WHEN

- At the first SSG meeting, the team should develop an initial IEP
- During each following SSG meeting, the IEP should be reviewed to make sure the plan still meets the needs of the child, and updated when it no longer suits the child's needs

## HOW

- Consider how the child learns best:
  - Do they need one-on-one support, or tutoring to catch up?
  - Are they being challenged in their learning?
  - If the child is Aboriginal they will have a cultural support plan. Consider how education elements from the cultural plan can be included in the Individual Education Plan
- Use short term goals to set the child up for success
- Use realistic goals. For example:
  - If you think the child might struggle with a full day at school initially after a long absence suggest a gradual transition.
- Celebrate when goals are achieved!
- Ask professionals to avoid using jargon so the child and carer understand all discussions

## HELP

- Contact your local Learning Advisor for more guidance on Individual Education Plans
- DET resources: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/individual-education-plans-ieps/resources>

# Educational Needs Analysis

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## WHY

- Children and young people in care often experience many disruptions to their learning, impacted by placement changes and adverse childhood experiences. These disruptions can cause significant challenges for a child's education.
- An Educational Needs Analysis (ENA) helps to guide and plan changes to support a child's education.

## WHAT

- An important collection of health and educational information that lead to a report, completed by Student Support Services (SSS). This terminology will be different in Catholic and Independent schools. Contact the Designated Teacher for more info.
- Information collected for an ENA can be different, depending on each child.
- The report helps to guide and make recommendations to support children's education
- The recommendations should include ways to support the child's interests, wellbeing, culture and identity, in order to support their education

## WHO

- Every child who has been in care for 3 months (cumulatively) must have an ENA
- Schools make the referral for a child's ENA to Student Support Services (SSS)
- Schools, SSS and DFFH work together to provide existing information. SSS may suggest additional information needs to be gathered
- All people and services supporting the child can contribute information to the ENA, including case managers and carers
- SSS write a report with recommendations to support the child's learning.

## WHEN

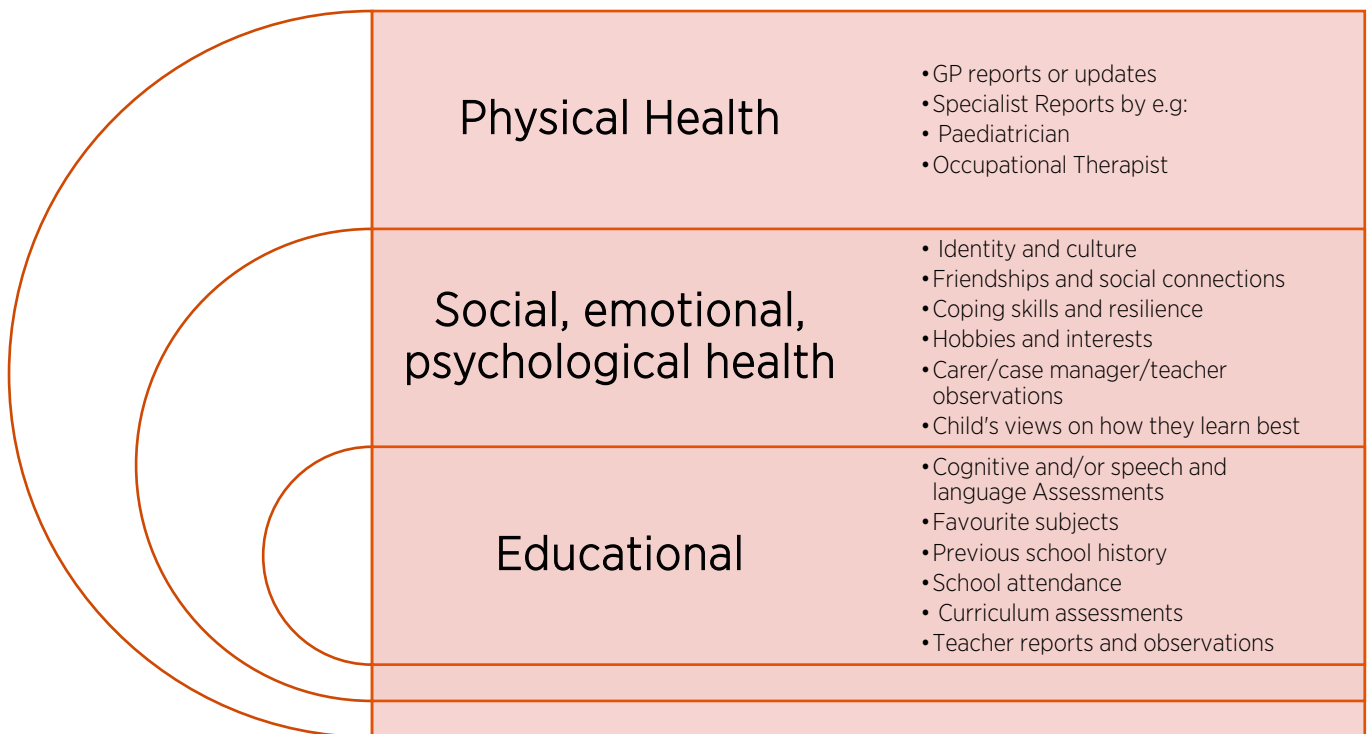
- Schools must make a referral for a child if they have been in care for 3 months (cumulatively)
- If there are immediate concerns, you can ask the school to make a referral sooner
- TIPS: Ask the Child Protection case manager if an ENA has been completed in the past.
- If a child has moved placements during the ENA process, the new school will liaise with SSS to continue the process
- A child who has previously had an ENA completed can benefit from a second. For example, if an ENA was completed in early primary school and now the young person is in secondary school, the school can request a new ENA be completed

## HELP

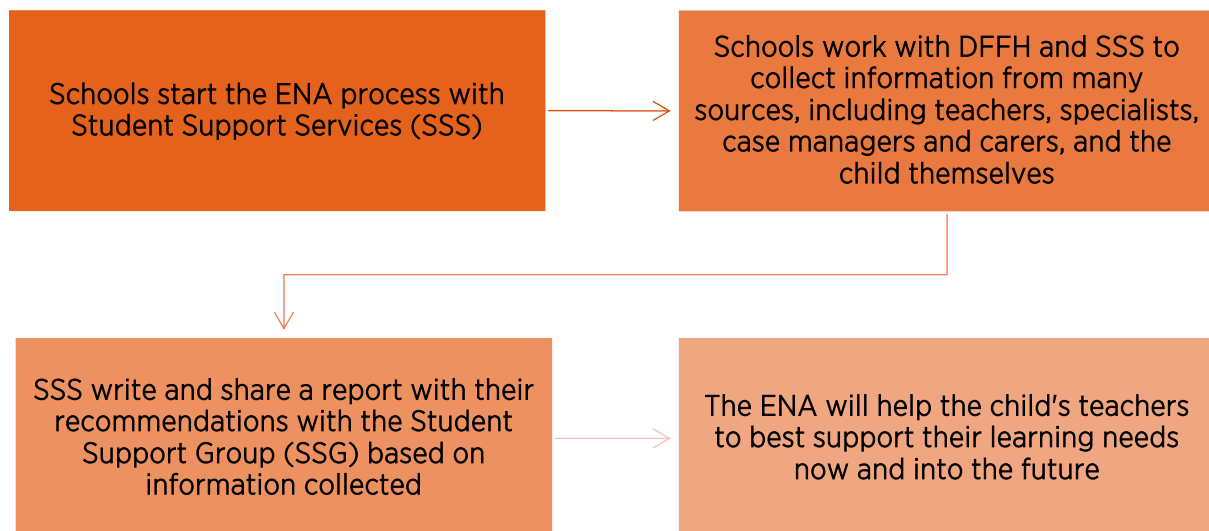
- If you think an ENA should to be completed more quickly, speak to the school principal.
- For additional support or other questions about an ENA, please contact your local LOOKOUT Learning Advisor for support
- <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/supporting-students-out-home-care/resources>

## What information can be collected?

The following is an example of some types of information collected for the Educational Needs Analysis. These aren't mandatory for the completion of an ENA, as the information gathered is specific to the child.



## Educational Needs Analysis Process



**IMPORTANT NOTE:** An Individual Education Plan (IEP) can be developed prior to an ENA being completed.

# Questions to ask and things to think about

Who is the child's Learning Mentor, and what support can they provide?	Who is the designated teacher, and what support can you provide?	Who is the Koorie Education Support Officer, and what support can they provide?
Is Aboriginal history and culture embedded in the curriculum?	Does the school do an Acknowledgement of Country?	Has the child had an educational needs analysis completed in the past?
Who should the carer advise at the school if their child is absent?	(Reduced timetable) What is the child's re-engagement goal and timeline?	Are there any learning supports available? This child needs help with _____
Can we schedule the next SSG meeting today?	What are the child's strengths?	What are the child's aspirations for after they leave secondary school? How can these be encourage?
Are there any after school activities the school runs?	What support is available for homework or tutoring?	How can their carer let you know if the child might have a rough day?
These things help the child feel safe and supported _____	What are the triggers (if any) that may lead to distressed behaviours?	Who do I tell if there are changes in support eg. workers or needs?
(Primary moving to secondary) Do you know when secondary school tours start at local schools?	(Secondary school) Has the child started their career action plan?	