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| Home Stretch change in circumstances (post care) |
| Practice advice |
| OFFICIAL |

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# Introduction

Home Stretch is delivered via the Better Futures program and was rolled out across Victoria in 2019 offering young people a more gradual and supported transition from care.

Through Home Stretch, eligible young people and their kinship carer, foster carer have the option of extending care arrangements up to the age of 21 years, supported by an allowance. Young people leaving residential care, kinship care, foster care, or permanent care can access an allowance to support them with housing and associated costs up to 21 years.

Home Stretch consists of three key components administered and delivered by Better Futures: an accommodation allowance, case work support and flexible funding.

In January 2021, Victoria was the first Australian jurisdiction to make extended care universal – meaning all young people leaving foster, kinship and residential care can receive a more gradual and supported transition to adulthood via Home Stretch. Through the Victorian Budget 2021/22, Better Futures and Home Stretch were expanded to include young people on permanent care orders.

Home Stretch funding is individual to the young person to support their goals and aspirations and moves with the young person when there are changes in circumstance. This can happen where there is a change in living arrangements and or the young person moves to another Department of Families, Fairness and Housing’s (the department) local area, division and or new Better Futures provider.

# Purpose

This practice advice outlines the processes required when young people make changes to their Home Stretch proposal as outlined above. These changes occur after the young person has transitioned from care to independence and the child protection order has ceased for the final time.

# Audience

This practice advice is for divisional Home Stretch/Better Futures senior project officers, Agency Performance and System Support (APSS) advisers[[1]](#footnote-1), Better Future providers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations involved in supporting young people receiving Home Stretch.

# Home Stretch eligibility

Young people are eligible to apply for Home Stretch if they are:

| Subject to child protection involvement | Subject to a permanent care arrangement |
| --- | --- |
| * have been referred and accepted by Better Futures
* are residing in out of home care arrangements; and
* are subject to any of the following orders: **family reunification order**, a **care by Secretary order** or a **long-term care order** on or after their sixteenth birthday.
 | * have been referred and accepted by Better Futures; and
* are on a **permanent care order[[2]](#footnote-2)** up until their 18th birthday.
 |
| Home Stretch commences after a young person’s child protection order ceases for the final time and supports are available up until 21 years of age.  | Young people on Permanent Care Orders can access Home Stretch as they turn 18 years and receive support up until they turn 21 years of age. |

# Home Stretch changes

Wherever possible, any changes to the approved Home Stretch proposal should be a planned and gradual process that includes the active voice of the young person. The discussions should form part of the Better Futures Support Plan including how proposed Home Stretch changes can continue to support the young person’s goals.

It is important to record all accommodation changes experienced by a young person on the **Accommodation and Respite** component in the Client Relationship Information System Support for Providers (CRISSP), and where there are changes to Home Stretch funding update these changes on the **Client Expenditure** component in CRISSP.

The following processes need to be followed where there are changes to the existing Home Stretch living arrangement.

## The young person’s approved Home Stretch Independent Living arrangement has changed



**Important to note –** in this scenario funding is already allocated to the Better Futures provider to administer and support the Home Stretch living arrangement.

**The Better Futures worker:**

* completes the ***Home Stretch (HS) Change Request*** form in consultation with the young person
* makes any funding adjustments to the existing independent living proposal. For example, changes to the young person’s contribution[[3]](#footnote-3) towards accommodation expenses or a funding change reflecting the new accommodation living arrangements
* emails the HS Change Request to the Better Futures program manager
* saves the approved HS Change Request in CRISSP Case Notes with a **Follow up Action -** recording the approval decision and follow up actions.
* If young person has moved to a different accommodation type and address:
* close the current CRISSP Accommodation and Respite record capturing end date, location at end date and exit reason
* create a new Accommodation & Respite record for the new living arrangement.

**The Better Futures program manager:**

* considers and approves the HS Change Request in line with Home Stretch program practice advice (note Home Stretch funding is already allocated to the Better Futures provider to administer so divisional approval to allocate funds is not required)

## The young person (in Home Stretch independent living arrangement) moves to a new local area or division and transfer to a new Better Futures provider



**The Better Futures worker:**

* contacts the new Better Futures provider to discuss the young person’s new living arrangements. (Wherever possible this is a planned move for the young person to allow the new Better Futures provider to put any supports in place if appropriate)
* reaches an agreement with the new Better Futures provider about the transition arrangements including the effective transfer date[[4]](#footnote-4)
* confirms outstanding Home Stretch flexible funding and Home Stretch accommodation allowance payments yet to be expended in current financial year. Refer to Section 6 in the document for more information on this
* completes and submits the HS Change Request document to the **divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** - confirming when young person is transferring to a new division or area
* saves approved HS Change Request document in the young person’s CRISSP file
* creates a CRISSP referral to new Better Futures provider that includes the relevant documentation such as Better Futures support plan, 15+ Care and Transition Plan, and key Home Stretch documents (including the approved HS Change Request document)
* closes the current Accommodation & Respite record capturing end date, location at end date and exit reason.

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** **in the former area / division contact:**

* processes the HS Change Request submitted by the Better Futures provider
* seeks financial delegate to approve the recoupment of Home Stretch funding
* emails the approved HS Change Request to the Better Futures provider
* notifies APSS Adviser of funding recoupment details to be processed in the next Service Agreement Management System (SAMS) variation window[[5]](#footnote-5)
* emails the **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** in new division to advise of the approved Home Stretch Change Request and pro-rata funding transfer details to be allocated to the new Better Futures provider (from agreed effective transfer date until the young person’s 21st birthday)
* arranges for budget transfer to new division

**APSS Adviser in the former area /division:**

* arranges for the recoupment of funds via the SAMS from current Better Futures provider[[6]](#footnote-6)
* communicates funding recoupment details to current Better Futures provider

**The new Better Futures provider:**

* reaches an agreement with the current Better Futures worker about the transition arrangements including the effective transfer date
* accepts the CRISSP referral
* completes a new HS Change Request form in consultation with young person
* emails the Change Request form to the **divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer**
* saves the approved Change Request form in CRISSP Case Notes with a **Follow up Action -** recording the approval decision
* records young person’s accommodation details in CRISSP Accommodation & Respite page – capturing type and address.

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** **in the new division:**

* confirms budget transfer from former division
* processes the HS Change Request submitted by the Better Futures provider
* seeks financial delegate to approve the pro-rata funding allocation
* communicates advice to the relevant APSS Adviser for the pro-rata funding to be allocated to new Better Futures provider in the next SAMS variation window[[7]](#footnote-7)

**APSS Adviser in the new area /division:**

* arranges for the pro-rata funding to be allocated to new Better Futures provider in SAMS
* communicates new funding allocation to Better Futures provider.

## Young person receiving Home Stretch home-based care allowance moves to a Home Stretch independent living arrangement



**It is important for the Better Futures provider to ascertain whether the change from a home-based care arrangement to independent accommodation is a temporary or permanent change. This is important as home-based care allowance payments cannot be reinstated once cancelled.**

In most cases the young person’s transition is planned and gradual but, in some circumstances, it is recommended that a “cooling off “period of **two weeks** is considered before any final changes are made to the home-based care proposal. This provides the young person and or carer an opportunity to consider all their options and any support required to continue the living arrangements. It is important that this information is communicated to the carer and young person and that they are aware of the process following the two-week period.

Divisions oversee the budget for Home Stretch care allowance payments to cover carer reimbursement payments. Once a young person leaves the approved home-based care arrangement, the pro-rata Home Stretch accommodation allowance is allocated to Better Futures providers to support their new accommodation arrangement in line with Home Stretch program requirements.

**Processes for supporting changes to approved Home Stretch home-based care to independent living**

**The Better Futures provider**

* confirms the moving out date with young person and carer and support required to make this happen
* upon confirmation, completes **Form B Commence or Cease Home Stretch Allowance** and submits to the care allowance helpdesk Caregivers@health.vic.gov.au <Caregivers@health.vic.gov.au>
* completes the **HS Change Request** in consultation with young person, determining young person’s and Home Stretch contributions. Ideally, this should occur at least two weeks prior to the young person changing their circumstances, although it is acknowledged that this may vary depending on the individual circumstances of the young person (and carer where relevant)
* submits the **HS Change Request Form** to the **divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer**

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer:[[8]](#footnote-8)**

* processes the HS Change Request submitted by the Better Futures provider
* seeks financial delegate to approve the pro-rata funding allocation capturing:
* independent living accommodation allowance
* casework support (via independent living rate)
* emails the approved HS Change Request to the Better Futures provider
* communicates advice to the APSS Adviser for the pro-rata funding to be allocated Better Futures provider (in SAMS).

**APSS Adviser:**

* arranges for the pro-rata funding to be allocated to the Better Futures provider (in SAMS) **[[9]](#footnote-9)**
* communicates funding allocation to Better Futures provider.

## 4. Young person and carer move to a new local area or division and transfer to a new Better Futures provider



The following steps are taken when the young person and their carer transfer to a new Better Futures provider and division.

**The responsible Better Futures provider supporting the young person:**

* consults with the young person and the carer about the date the transfer will occur
* negotiates the **Effective end date,** and **Effective start date** with the new Better Futures provider
* completes the HS Change Request and submits completed document to the **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** - confirming when young person is transferring to a new division or area
* completes the Carer Allowance Help Desk (CAHD) Forms A: Home Stretch Change of Details, this form should capture the carer’s new address details
* emails the **Form A** to Caregivers@health.vic.gov.au <Caregivers@health.vic.gov.au> (within 3 working days of the change)
* creates a CRISSP referral to new Better Futures provider that includes the relevant documentation such as Better Futures support plan, Better Futures Referral Checklist, and key Home Stretch documentation
* closes the current Accommodation & Respite record capturing end date, location at end date and exit reason.

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** **in the former division:**

* processes the HS Change Request submitted by the Better Futures provider
* calculates funding to be recouped from current Better Futures provider
* seeks financial delegate to approve the budget transfer and the recoupment of Home Stretch funding via the following activities:
* Flexible funding
* Casework support funding
* emails the approved HS Change Request to the Better Futures provider
* contacts the **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** in new division to inform of available pro-rata funding in the current Financial Year to be re-allocated to new Better Futures provider
* confirms budget transfer from current to new division
* communicates advice to the current APSS Adviser for the pro-rata funding to be recouped from Better Futures provider in SAMS

**APSS Adviser in the former division:**

* arranges for the pro-rata funding to be recouped from Better Futures provider (in SAMS) **[[10]](#footnote-10)**
* communicates funding recoupment details to Better Futures provider.

**Better Futures provider in new division:**

* accepts CRISSP referral
* Creates Better Futures Service Provision record
* completes the HS Change Request and submits completed document to the **divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer**
* saves approved Change Request form in CRISSP case note file
* records the young person’s address in client address, and carer’s new address in the Residency field of the Agency CRISSP Accommodation/Respite, if with the same agency[[11]](#footnote-11)
* completes the Carers Allowance Help Desk (CAHD) Form C: Change of Details for Care Allowance capturing the details of the new Better Futures Provider
* emails completed form to the CAHD Caregivers@health.vic.gov.au <Caregivers@health.vic.gov.au>

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer in the new division:**

* confirms budget transfer from former division
* processes the HS Change Request submitted by the new Better Futures provider
* seeks financial delegate to approve funding allocation to new provider via the following activities:
* Flexible funding
* Casework support funding
* emails the approved HS Change Request to the new Better Futures provider
* communicates advice to the relevant APSS Adviser for pro-rata funding to be allocated to new Better Futures provider in SAMS

**APSS Adviser in the new division:**

* arranges for the pro-rata funding to be allocated to new Better Futures provider (in SAMS) **[[12]](#footnote-12)**
* communicates new funding allocation to Better Futures provider.

## Young person moves out of the approved Home Stretch accommodation to a living arrangement not supported by Home Stretch

Funding via Home Stretch must be suspended if the young person no longer meets eligibility criteria or moves out of the approved Home Stretch accommodation to reside in an arrangement not supported by Home Stretch. These situations include:

* returning to live with parent/s
* moving overseas; or
* incarceration/detention.

If a young person is disengaged, proactive measures must be considered and pursued by Better Futures to re-connect them to the service. If significant efforts have been made and the young person chooses not to re-engage in the Home Stretch service response, Home Stretch funding supports must be suspended until the young person is ready to engage.

All young people suspended from receiving Home Stretch supports remain eligible to access Better Futures service response; enabling them access to Better Futures supports, flexible funding and community connections service offers.

Young people should be advised of the option to reinstate Home Stretch supports should their circumstances change prior to turning 21 years of age.

The following steps are taken when the Home Stretch service response is on hold.

**The responsible Better Futures provider supporting the young person:**

* confirms young person’s living arrangement and determines whether arrangement can be supported by Home Stretch
* advises the young person of Home Stretch program requirements and funding suspension requirement
* completes the HS Change Request and submits completed document to the **divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** – capturing reason why Home Stretch supports is on hold
* closes the current Accommodation & Respite record capturing end date, location at end date and exit reason
* provides Better Futures service response.

If young person is moving interstate, identify available supports in those jurisdictions (including post care support services) and discuss with the young person how the Home Stretch allowance and flexible funding can be utilised while living in interstate.

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer:**

* processes the HS Change Request submitted by the Better Futures provider
* seeks financial delegate to approve the recoupment of Home Stretch funding
* emails the approved HS Change Request to the Better Futures provider
* notifies APSS Adviser of funding recoupment details to be processed in the next Service Agreement Management System (SAMS) variation window.

**APSS Adviser in the former area /division:**

* arranges for the recoupment of funds via the SAMS from current Better Futures provider **[[13]](#footnote-13)**
* communicates funding recoupment details to current Better Futures provider.

# Requests for Special Consideration

Requests for special consideration may be assessed on a case-by-case basis through consultation between different parties including the young person, Better Futures provider, designated divisional contact and Care Services Design and Improvement. The requests can only be considered for Home Stretch independent allowance and not home-based care allowance.

Special applications may also be put forward for eligible young people (supported by Better Futures) that did not pursue Home Stretch whilst in care, however, later change their minds and now wish to apply for Home Stretch supports.

Should the request for special consideration be approved, Home Stretch funding will be calculated from the approval date. Requests for retrospective funding allocation will need to form part of the initial application for special consideration to access Home Stretch; these requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

To apply for special consideration the following steps need to be taken:

**The Better Futures provider:**

* confirms young person’s circumstances and request for Home Stretch
* verifies that the young person is eligible for Home Stretch (refer to eligibility criteria)
* sends formal email to the **divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** of the young person’s request to be considered for Home Stretch, providing the following key details:
* Young person’s name
* Date of birth
* CRIS number
* Last statutory order type
* Order expiry date
* Rationale for special consideration.

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer:**

* emails the Better Futures/Home Stretch Principal Practice Leader providing the rationale for the request and a recommendation
* notifies the Better Futures provider of outcome.

**Better Futures/Home Stretch Principal Practice Leader (**Care Services Design and Improvement)

* **emails confirmation of the decision**
* young person does not receive a Home Stretch package but continues to be supported with Better Futures flexible funding and case work support particularly in relation to accessing and maintaining accommodation options.

OR

* young person is granted a Home Stretch package.

Once eligibility and access is confirmed, the next step is to formally apply for Home Stretch via special consideration (post order). The following steps are taken to confirm Home Stretch approval and funding arrangements:

**The Better Futures provider:**

* completes the offline Home Stretch application and Home Stretch Accommodation Proposal with young person outlining the proposed independent living arrangement to be supported by Home Stretch.

Refer to:

[Home Stretch home-based care allowance](https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/ChildrenYouthFamilies-DHHS-GRP/Shared%20Documents/Better%20Futures/Change%20of%20circumstances%20PA/Home%20Stretch%20home-based%20care%20allowance) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form> and

[Home Stretch Allowance Independent Proposal Form](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-independent-accommodation-proposal) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-independent-accommodation-proposal> to provide details of a proposed independent living arrangement.

* emails the **divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** the completed Home Stretch application and Home Stretch Accommodation Proposal

**Once approved, the Better Futures provider:**

* saves approved Home Stretch application in CRISSP Case Notes with a **Follow up Action** capturing the approval status recorded.

**The divisional** **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer:**

* processes the Home Stretch application and Home Stretch Accommodation Proposal
* calculates the pro-rata funding allocation:
* casework support
* flexible funding
* accommodation allowance
* seeks financial delegate to approve the calculated pro-rata amount
* emails the approved Home Stretch application and Home Stretch Accommodation Proposal to the Better Futures provider
* adds CRIS case note in closure phase noting the Home Stretch approval status and saves the approved Home Stretch application and Home Stretch Accommodation Proposal documentation in the CRIS
* contacts Transitions from Care team seeking budget transfer[[14]](#footnote-14)
* confirms budget transfer to division
* communicates advice to the APSS Adviser for the pro-rata funding to be processed in SAMS
* contacts CRIS/SP Helpdesk and logs CRIS data fix issue to capture Home Stretch application and independent living proposal approval status.

**APSS Adviser:**

* arranges for the pro-rata funding to be allocated to Better Futures provider (in SAMS) **[[15]](#footnote-15)**
* communicates funding allocation details to Better Futures provider

# Changes to Home Stretch funding in Service Agreement Management System (SAMS)

When Home Stretch funding commences, or a change is made to existing Home Stretch funding, the department will process the changes in the Service Agreement as soon as practicable. Every time there is new funding allocated or a variation to current funding, divisional approval is required to support this change.

Funding will be processed from the start date (the effective date of approval for Home Stretch) until the end of the current financial year (year 1) and then for further financial years (out-years) up to the end of the young person’s eligibility for Home Stretch (usually their 21st Birthday).

**Important points to note in relation to funding:**

* Young people living in an independent living arrangement are funded for 75 hours of case work/agency support per annum
* Young people living with their carer are funded for 25 hours of case work/agency support per annum
* The department is working towards the implementation of IFAMS, a database which will provide easy to read lists of funding for each individual included in service agreements. IFAMS is expected to be rolled out in yearly 2022.

Table 1. The table below provides full details of how the funding is entered into service agreements

| Description | Activity number | Activity name | Sub-activity name | Who is it paid to? | How is it paid? |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Case work (hours of service) | 31290 | Individual, child and family support - Better Futures | Brief intervention (10 hours) - Home Stretch | The Better Futures funded service provider | Through the SAMS2 service agreement |
| Flexible funding | 31292 | Flexible funding - Better Futures | Home Stretch Flexible funding | The Better Futures funded service provider | Through the SAMS2 service agreement |
| Accommodation allowance - for young people in an independent living arrangement | 31292 | Flexible funding - Better Futures | Home Stretch Accommodation Allowance | The Better Futures funded service provider | Through the SAMS2 service agreement |
| Accommodation allowance - for young people living with carer | N/A | N/A | N/A | The Carer | The Care Allowance Help Desk (CAHD) process these payments |

# Changes to Home Stretch funding allocation processes

The responsibility of processing approved Home Stretch funding is expected to transition from APSS advisers to divisional Home Stretch/Better Futures senior project officers at the start of 2022. This transition will be made as soon as the Individualised Funding Allocation Management System (IFAMS, previously known as RIS) Home Stretch system enhancement is finalised and formally rolled out across the state.

This process change is internal to the department and will not impact on established processes for Better Futures providers.

# Change request form template

The Home Stretch Change Request Form has been developed to document and support changes to living arrangements post order in compliance with Home Stretch program requirements.

The Change Request form is completed by the allocated Better Futures worker.

The form contains macros. When opening the application form, a warning will appear noting that macros need to be enabled for the application form to function, please change the settings to allow for macros (a warning window will pop up and provide you with options, either ‘enable macros’ or ‘yes’ in order to allow the ‘add field’ functions).

Throughout the document there are some data fields that allows free text entries, and others containing dropdown list options and tick/check boxes to select from. Data entry is required in relevant sections to inform the request outcome decision.

## Form structure

The Change Request Form is divided into seven separate sections titled:

1. Young person’s Details
2. Home Stretch Funding Overview (allocated and expended in the current financial year)
3. Section Completion Checklist
4. Change Request Details
5. Approval Checklist
6. Form Completed by
7. Proposal Outcome

Sections 1-5 is populated by the Better Futures worker. Note, Section 3 is a checklist that outlines proposed changes and the corresponding sub-sections to be completed in Section 4.

Section 4 is separated in to three sub-sections, users are required ONLY to complete the relevant sections related to the proposed change:

1. Transfer of Better Futures supports to a new provider – reflecting details of transfer arrangements and the new Better Futures provider
2. Accommodation change – capturing the details proposed accommodation change
3. Accommodation allowance contribution change – reflecting changes to previously approved contribution amounts and/or expenditure items.

Section 5 contains an approver checklist – listing the program area/department authorised to consider and process the Change Request Form.

Section 6 captures the details of the worker that completed the Change Request Form.

Section 7 is to be completed by the Approver - capturing the outcome of the request.

## Approval pathway

Changes to approved Home Stretch accommodation arrangements post order requires formal approval by an authorised person in compliance with Home Stretch program requirements.

Depending on the proposed change there are two distinct pathways to secure formal approval:

* department (via established divisional financial approval arrangements); or
* Better Futures

### Department:

Responsibility rests with the relevant DFFH Division to consider change requests where the proposed change warrants a Service Agreement variation, requiring:

* new or additional funding
* the cessation/recoupment of funding; or
* suspension of funding.

| Examples of proposed changes |
| --- |
| Young person is moving to a new area/division and/or a new Better Futures provider. This change requires the pro-rata funding to be recouped from current Better Futures provider, a budget transfer to the new division, funding re-allocated to the new Better Futures provider. |
| Young person is moving from an approved Home Stretch HBC arrangement to Independent Living. This change requires the accommodation allowance funding to be transferred from the division to Better Futures, the casework support funding to be increased to reflect the Independent Living rate. |
| Young person’s circumstances change, and they are no longer in scope of receiving a Home Stretch response. In this instance Home Stretch funding will be put on hold. |

### Better Futures:

Home Stretch contributions should be formally reviewed every six months in consultation with the young person - supporting a planned gradual reduction of Home Stretch contributions.

Better Futures providers can consider a change request, where Home Stretch funding has already been allocated and there are no changes to current Service Agreement funding arrangements.

These change/s can be considered by the Better Futures program manager in compliance with Home Stretch Program requirements.

| Examples of proposed changes |
| --- |
| Young person is moving from an approved independent living arrangement to a new accommodation arrangement.  |
| When there is a change to the approved Home Stretch Accommodation Allowance contribution amounts and identified items. |

# Key DFFH divisional contact

The **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officers** have been appointed in each division to provide operational support and coordination of Better Futures and Home Stretch.

Change Request Forms requiring divisional approval must be submitted to the **Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer** for processing.

| Division | Contact email |
| --- | --- |
| South Division | betterfuturessouth@dffh.vic.gov.au <betterfuturessouth@dffh.vic.gov.au> |
| East Division | betterfutureseast@dffh.vic.gov.au <betterfutureseast@dffh.vic.gov.au> |
| West Division | betterfutureswest@dffh.vic.gov.au <betterfutureswest@dffh.vic.gov.au> |
| North Division | betterfuturesnorth@dffh.vic.gov.au <betterfuturesnorth@dffh.vic.gov.au> |

# Home Stretch forms and templates

Better Futures providers are responsible for completing the following offline forms (post order) for eligible young people on permanent care orders or when there are changes to:

* approved Home Stretch living arrangements; or
* changes to the Better Futures provider; or
* changes to carer’s personal details.

The following forms are used for Home Stretch:

**Home Stretch application Form**

Accessible via CRIS.

The offline template is available via:

Home Stretch website <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form>

**Home Stretch Independent Accommodation Proposal Form**

Accessible via CRIS.

The offline template is available via:

Home Stretch website <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form>

**Home Stretch Request Change Form**

This form is to be used when there are changes to approved Home Stretch accommodation arrangements or if a young person is transferring to a new Better Futures provider.

The offline template is available via:

Home Stretch website <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form>

## Care allowance forms

The following Care Allowance forms are available via CRIS/SP or via the [Funded Agency Channel My Agency](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au/) Resources section <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au> or email the Care Allowance help desk

**Form A: Home Stretch Change of Details**

This form is used by the Better Futures provider for a change of details for a carer i.e., change of address or name.

**Form B: Commence or Cease Home Stretch Allowance**

This form is used by Better Futures providers for ceasing Home Stretch Allowance (HBC) payments.

**Form C: Change of Details for Home Stretch Allowance**

This form is used to extend carer payments via Home Stretch:

The placement provider or the child protection program that created the current placement is responsible to submit the Form C to the Care Allowance Helpdesk. This Form must be submitted not less than four weeks prior to the cessation of the young person’s child protection order. This will initiate the payment of Home Stretch Allowance – Home Based Care for approved carers.

Only the placement provider or child protection area that created the current placement can initiate this payment via a Form C.

The Form may also be used by Better Futures provider (post order) to:

* initiate the payment of Home Stretch Allowance via HBC for approved permanent carers. This action is only permitted for permanent carers as the CRIS case is closed.
* capture changes to provider details for example when a carer moves to a new division/area and Home Stretch service response is to be provided by a new Better Futures provider.

**Form D: Authorisation for direct deposit of Home Stretch allowance**

This form is to be used when a carer is changing bank account details. Please note: Home Stretch payments cannot be paid via cheque.

# Glossary

| Term | Definition |
| --- | --- |
| Aboriginal | A person of Aboriginal descent. The term Aboriginal within this document includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. |
| Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) | An ACCO is an organisation established and operated by the local Aboriginal community to deliver holistic, comprehensive, and culturally appropriate services to the community which controls it, through a locally elected Board of Management. |
| Agency performance and system support (APSS) | Area based teams located in the department’s operational divisions with responsibility for contract managing organisations funded to deliver services on behalf of the department against their Service Agreement requirements. |
| APSS advisers | They are part of the local area APSS teams, they are the department’s point of contact for funded organisations and assume the lead role in performance monitoring and contract management.  |
| Approved carer | A kinship carer who has been assessed and approved by the department or a foster carer by a CSO or ACCO on behalf of the department as suitable to provide home-based care for children. Children will not be placed with any person who has not undergone the mandatory assessment and approval processes. Following assessment by a CSO or ACCO, foster carers must be approved by a CSO or ACCO Carer Approval Panel. |
| Area | Within the department there are four operational divisions that oversee and coordinate the delivery and funding of services and initiatives across 17 local areas of the State.  |
| Care allowance | Assessed and approved home-based carers are eligible to receive a care allowance that contributes to the day-to-day costs of caring for a child or young person.  |
| Care Allowance Helpdesk | The helpdesk is responsible for the administration and processing reimbursements once a request has been approved. Staff and carers may contact helpdesk staff on 1300 552 319 for queries concerning payment start and cease dates, allowance payments, and amounts due. Helpdesk staff are not able to make decisions about eligibility or increasing reimbursement amounts.  |
| Care and Placement Plan | A Care and Placement Plan is a LAC record that details the day-to-day arrangements for care of a child in out-of-home care. It identifies their long and short-term needs and sets out who must do what and by when in order for these need to be met. It is developed by the care team.For young people aged 15–18 years, the 15+ Care and Transition Plan applies and reflects a greater focus on the development of independent living skills and preparation for leaving care. |
| Care by Secretary Order | A protection order that confers parental responsibility for the child on the Secretary to the exclusion of all others (refer to s. 172 of the CYFA) |
| Carer reimbursement | Carer reimbursements provide a financial contribution towards the ordinary costs associated with the care of a child/young person. The reimbursement is not considered a ‘payment’ for being a carer and is not a source of income. Carer reimbursements are designed to contribute to (but are not limited to) household goods and services, utility bills, food, transport, fuel, internet, and other items. |
| Care team | A care team is the group of people who jointly provide the care for a child while that child is in out-of-home care. The care team has a specific focus on meeting the child’s needs – its members have a shared responsibility to manage the day-to-day care and best interests of the child in accordance with the overall case plan. A care team should always include the child’s case manager, key workers from various agencies working with them, the child’s family (if appropriate) and any other appropriate adults who play a significant role in the life of the child. |
| Case manager | **A case manager** is the person allocated the primary responsibility of overseeing implementation of the young person’s case plan including the 15+ Care and Transition plan. This can be either a child protection practitioner or a contracted case manager (employed by an OoHC/Care Services provider).  |
| Closed case | Closed cases are where child protection is no longer involved and has closed the case on CRIS.  |
| CRIS | The Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) is the electronic client and case record management system used by Child Protection and by Care Services staff with case contracting responsibilities.  |
| CRISSP | The Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP) is the electronic client and case record management system used by all funded organisations providing out-of-home care and Better Futures.  |
| CRISSP Accommodation and Respite Page: | All Home Stretch living arrangements must be recorded in CRISSP via the Accommodation and Respite page. This page should capture all accommodation records experienced by a young person whilst receiving a Better Futures/Home Stretch response. This component is particularly useful to record the number of movements and various accommodation settings experienced by the young person. |
| CRISSP Provider Group | In CRISSP this term is used to identify the type of service being provided. Provider Groups are related to the funded activity that the organisation provides to the client. Home Stretch funded providers will have a Better Futures Provider Group established in CRISSP. CRISSP users are attached to Provider Groups and as such have access to information recorded on clients in that Provider Group. When transferring young people to new Better Futures providers – it’s important that the right Provider Group is selected in CRISSP to facilitate the CRISSP-to-CRISSP Better Futures referral. |
| CRISSP Service Provision Record | When setting up a case in CRISSP, a Service Provision record must be created to link the client with Better Futures. The Service Provision record in CRISSP records when the client commenced receiving a Better Futures service response, as well as the date they exited from the service. There is no requirement to create a separate Service Provision record for Home Stretch; Home Stretch is a service offer delivered via Better Futures.  |
| Division | A division of the department. Four divisions (East, North, South, West) across the State provide strategic oversight and coordination for the local areas within them. The divisions provide corporate and administrative services and oversee service implementation, quality, and performance. Each division covers a mix of rural, outer-metropolitan, and inner-metropolitan Victoria.  |
| Effective Start Date | An effective date refers to the commencement date of the Home Stretch response (also reflecting funding start date).  |
| Effective End Date | The effective end date refers to the end date of Home Stretch; this may reflect the young person’s 21st birthday or when young person ceases receiving a Home Stretch response from the current Better Futures provider i.e., when a young person transfers to a new catchment area. |
| Funded Agency Channel (FAC) | The FAC is a website developed for funded organisations to inform them about their Service Agreement(s) with the department/s and where they can access resources to support business management and decision making. In ‘My Agency’, the secure area of FAC, organisations can view their Service Agreements (including variations), funding, payment schedules, invoices, complete their compliance requirements (including uploading documents), review information and record and update contact details for their staff. |
| Foster care | Foster care is the temporary care of a child within a home-based setting by an accredited, trained, and registered foster carer. Foster care includes therapeutic foster care and adolescent community placement programs. |
| Foster carer | Foster carers are volunteers who provide care for children and young people in their own home. The term ‘foster carer’ used in this document may refer to one or more adult members of the household who have been assessed and trained, approved by a panel and registered to provide foster care in Victoria. |
| Home-based care (HBC) | HBC refers to the care provided by registered foster carers or kinship carers in their own homes for children unable to live at home due to risk of abuse and neglect.  |
| Home Stretch Application | This is the formal request to access Home Stretch either via Home-based Care or Independent Living (IL).  |
| Home Stretch Independent Living Proposal | The Home Stretch Independent Living Proposal is the document that outlines the planned independent living arrangement to be supported via Home Stretch. The proposal document is accessed and completed only after the Home Stretch application via Independent Living is approved. |
| Home Stretch Accommodation Type | Home Stretch Accommodation Type refers to the accommodation arrangement type to be supported via Home Stretch. There are currently only two options – via Home-based Care or via Independent Living. |
| Home Stretch Accommodation Allowance | The Home Stretch Accommodation Allowance refers to the funding amount allocated each year to support the approved independent living arrangement.  |
| Home Stretch Accommodation Allowance contribution | Home Stretch Accommodation Allowance contribution refers to the Home Stretch funding amount that is required to contribute towards identified expenditure items as outlined in the Home Stretch Accommodation Proposal or the Change Request documents.  |
| Home Stretch Flexible Funding | This is thebrokerage funding allocated to Better Futures providers each year to support the young person (approved for Home Stretch) to achieve established goals and help meet their immediate needs. This funding is attached to the individual. Unspent funding reported by Better Futures will be recouped by the responsible division. |
| Home Stretch Casework Support | Additional funding is allocated to Better Futures providers to strengthen staffing capacity to support young people approved for Home Stretch. The casework support funding rate will vary depending on whether it is a Home-based care or an Independent Living arrangement.  |
| Home Stretch Home-based care | This refers to Home Stretch extended care arrangement via an approved home-based care living arrangement; providing the opportunity for the young person to remain living with their foster, kinship, or permanent carer/s post order up until 21 years of age. |
| Home Stretch Independent living | The approved Home Stretch accommodation via independent living. This may include a young person living:on their own in private/public rental or in student accommodation shared accommodation with extended family members or friends shared accommodation via room rental agreements - including bungalow/studio or movable unit (located in a privately owned property); orin a short to medium-term temporary accommodation including transitional housing management (THM) accommodation, or in a caravan park.In some instances, young people may also reside in quasi-independent living arrangements with carers in self-contained units located in a carer’s property – this living arrangement will be classified as “independent living” only if the approved carer is no longer in receipt of HBC carer payments via Home Stretch. Returning to live with parent/s is not an independent living option in scope of Home Stretch funding and supports. |
| Home Stretch Change Request form | Refers to the document template used to document changes made to approved Home Stretch accommodation, support, or funding contribution arrangements. Changes are subject to approval arrangements and the approval pathway will depend on the proposed change. |
| Kinship care | Kinship care is care provided by relatives or a member of a child’s social network when a child cannot live with their parents. Statutory kinship arrangements usually occur as a result of Child Protection intervention and a subsequent decision being made to place a child with relatives or a friend. This may involve an order made by the Children’s Court. |
| Kinship carers | Kinship carers are relatives or members of a child’s social network who provide care for children in their own home. A statutory ‘kinship carer’ is used to describe one or more adult members of the household who have completed a pre-placement assessment and approval by Child Protection. |
| Kinship care (Private): | Sometimes referred to as ‘informal’ or non-statutory’ kinship care. It includes those arrangements where children are cared for by relatives or friends without any Child Protection intervention. These types of arrangements are not in scope of Home Stretch. |
| Open case | Open cases are where child protection remain involved to address child safety concerns and the case is open in CRIS.  |
| Out-of-home care (OoHC): | Out-of-home care (also known as Care Services) is a temporary, medium, or long-term living arrangement for children and young people who cannot live in their family home. In this instance a legal order is in place to support the arrangement. In Victoria, OoHC includes kinship care, foster care, residential care, lead tenant arrangements as well as independent living arrangements funded via Targeted Care Packages (TCPs).  |
| Permanent Care | Children placed in permanent care come through child protection services. Unlike adoption, it is not a voluntary placement. The department makes decisions about the safety of children, and for a few this sometimes means they are unable to return home to their birth parents or other relatives. In these cases, the decision is made for permanent care.The permanent care arrangement is formalised when a permanent care order is made by the Children’s Court, granting custody and guardianship to the permanent family. Legally this means that permanent care parents will be responsible for day-to-day care of the child and long-term decisions about things like education, changes in residence, health, and employment.The permanent care order expires when the child turns 18 years of age. |
| Pro-rata funding | Pro-rata funding is the term used to describe a portion of’ the annualised funding. For example, if a young person starts Home Stretch on 1January they will not receive the full annualised amount calculated from the start of the financial year, rather the pro-rata funding calculated from 1 January to 30 June. |
| Prior Year Adjustment | Funding adjustments that relate to services delivered in a previous financial year is referred to as Prior Year Adjustments. These can be both positive (payment for services provided in a previous year) or negative (where the department is recouping overpayments or unspent funds that relate to services in a previous financial year). |
| Protection orders | The Children’s Court has the power to make a broad range of orders in relation to the care and protection of children. Upon finding that a child is in need of protection, the court may make one of the following protection orders:* an interim accommodation
* a family preservation
* a family reunification
* a care by Secretary
* a long-term care

A protection order may continue in force after the child turns 17 years of age but ceases to be in force when the child turns 18. |
| Recoupment: | Recoupment: is the process of returning previously allocated funds resulting in a reduction of funding. Recoups may be undertaken as prior year adjustments (i.e., for unspent flexible funding allocated in the previous financial year) or a return of funds allocated in the current financial year. The latter will occur for any overpayments or when young people transfer to a new catchment area/division. |
| Service Agreement Management System (SAMS) | SAMS is the system used by the Department of Health and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing to process approved funds to funded organisations for delivery of services in the community on behalf of the department. SAMS has links to the Funded Agency Channel (FAC) – capturing all approved funding commitments processed, this information is accessed by funded agencies in FAC. |
| SAMS Commitment | Refers to a commitment to pay an organisation at an agreed funding level. Funding commitments sit under a SAMS service plan and activity and are identified as being ongoing or fixed term funding as well as showing the location of where services are to be delivered. All SAMS commitments have a commitment identification number. |
| SAMS Variation | A variation is any change to the Service Agreement, including a change to terms conditions, funding, applicable departmental policies, or targets. |
| SAMS Variation window | The Service Agreement business cycle and the SAMS system have peak periods for loading changes to commitments. These periods are called variation windows and have set time frames to take advantage of automated functions in the system. |
| The department | The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victoria). |
| Unit price | Unit price is the annualised price set for the funded activity item (based on agreed measures). Funding allocated to Better Futures providers will vary depending on the activity item (Home Stretch Flexible Funding, Home Stretch casework support or Home Stretch Accommodation Allowance), start and end date, and the number of units/targets allocated. Funded activities with established unit prices are subject to annual price indexation increases.  |

# Related practice advice

* Home Stretch eligibility, application and approval
* Home Stretch – home-based care
* Home Stretch - permanent care
* Home Stretch - independent accommodation

# Additional Information

This document should be read in conjunction with the following advice:

[Home Stretch - application form](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form)  <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-application-form>

[Home Stretch independent accommodation proposal](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-independent-accommodation-proposal)  <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch-independent-accommodation-proposal>

[Home Stretch eligibility, application and approval - practice advice (word)](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch)  <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch >

[Home Stretch Independent Living - practice advice](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch)  <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch>

[Home Stretch Home Based Care - practice advice](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch)  <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch>

[Leaving care page on the Services website](https://services.dhhs.vic.gov.au/leaving-care) < https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/leaving-care>

[Leaving care page on the Providers website](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/leaving-care) < https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/leaving-care>

[Funded Agency Channel](https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au) <https://fac.dhhs.vic.gov.au>

[services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-home-based-carers-victoria](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-home-based-carers-victoria) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/support-home-based-carers-victoria>

# Document history and control

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| To receive this document in another format, email Children and Families Policy Branch <ChildrenYouthFamilies@dffhs.vic.gov.au>Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.© State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, December 2021Available at [providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/home-stretch> |

1. A supplementary document will be developed for internal staff providing greater detail regarding new Individualised Funding Allocation Management System (IFAMS, previously known as RIS) processes and any actions required in the Service Agreement Management System. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. All young people on a permanent care orders are now eligible for Better Futures support from 15 years and 9 months, and for Home Stretch from age 18. This change was effective from 1 July 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Young people may contribute to the cost of their accommodation such as rent while the allowance supports other expenses such as housing set up or utility bills. Contribution arrangements are periodically reviewed (at least every six months) and an agreement reached between the young person and the Better Futures worker on contribution amounts. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The agreed transfer date will inform the pro-rata casework support funding allocation to the new provider. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This step won’t be required when Individualised Funding Allocation Management System (IFAMS, previously known as RIS) is operational. IFAMS is expected to be rolled out in 2022. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. APSS advisers are currently processing all Home Stretch variation commitments in SAMS, however this process is expected to change when IFAMS becomes operational - as Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer will assume responsibility for entering new or funding variations into IFAMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. APSS advisers are currently processing all Home Stretch variation commitments in SAMS, however this process is expected to change when IFAMS becomes operational - as Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer will assume responsibility for entering new or funding variations into IFAMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. There will be advice provided outlining roles and responsibilities for APSS and the new Better Futures /Home Stretch positions (one position for each division). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. APSS advisers are currently processing all Home Stretch variation commitments in SAMS, however this process is expected to change when IFAMS becomes operational - as Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer will assume responsibility for entering new or funding variations into IFAMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. APSS advisers are currently processing all Home Stretch variation commitments in SAMS, however this process is expected to change when IFAMS becomes operational - as Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer will assume responsibility for entering new or funding variations into IFAMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. CRISSP functionality currently does not allow second Better Futures Provider access to the Home Stretch application and hyperlink, it has been identified as a future enhancement. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. APSS advisers are currently processing all Home Stretch variation commitments in SAMS, however this process is expected to change when IFAMS becomes operational - as Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer will assume responsibility for entering new or funding variations into IFAMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. APSS advisers are currently processing all Home Stretch variation commitments in SAMS, however this process is expected to change when IFAMS (RIS) becomes operational as Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer will assume responsibility for entering new or funding variations into IFAMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. IFAMS is being adapted to track funding for Better Futures and Home Stretch with first stage of this build planned for December 2021. Once developed, more advice will be provided on budget transfer arrangements and IFAMS processes. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. APSS advisers are currently processing all Home Stretch variation commitments in SAMS, however this process is expected to change when IFAMS (RIS) becomes operational as Better Futures/Home Stretch senior project officer will assume responsibility for entering new or funding variations into IFAMS. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)