

Little Stars Learners[®]

Connect. Learn. Thrive.



LITTLE STARS
FOUNDATION

Fun. Laughter. Hope.

*Little Stars Learners Program is an
initiative of Little Stars Foundation.*

Information kit 2025

Intensive, trauma-informed educational interventions for young people living in out-of-home care



Young people living in foster, kinship, and residential care often experience greater difficulties in school due to housing instability and childhood trauma impacting cognitive, social and emotional function. As they navigate the complexities of the foster care system, these young individuals often grapple with placement instability, frequent school absences, and unsuccessful attempts at reunification. The resulting lack of a sense of safety compounds their struggles, leading to a compromised understanding of key curriculum concepts. This not only hampers academic progress but also ripples into peer relationships, confidence, mental health and self-esteem, magnifying the challenge. These cumulative factors create a disheartening trajectory, increasing the likelihood of school disconnection and other adverse life outcomes.

Our program seeks to create brighter futures for vulnerable young people by keeping them in school and their foster homes, with a reputation for dramatically improving literacy and numeracy skills while also promoting pro-social behaviours and household harmony. Key to the success of the program is that everything we do is grounded in consistency, relationship, connection and fun.

For a copy of our recent **Social Return on investment Evaluation Report completed by Lumenia in 2024** please email us at info@littlestarsfoundation.org.au.

Lisa Honeychurch
Founding Director

The challenges for young people in care

Young people living in foster, kinship, and residential care face profound and complex challenges that deeply affect their educational journeys. These young people, often affected by childhood trauma, struggle to cognitively, socially, and emotionally function in and out of the classroom, resulting in lower engagement and academic achievement than their peers.

The effects of trauma can manifest in behavioral difficulties, leading to higher suspension and exclusion rates in school. Placement instability further disrupts learning, with young people frequently changing homes and schools, adding to their struggles in maintaining academic progress.



Without targeted intervention, these young people are at significant risk of lifelong social and economic disadvantage.

Early Intervention Matters...

The Little Stars Learners program is designed to address these challenges by delivering intensive, trauma-informed educational interventions to young people living in foster, kinship, and residential care. Our early intervention approach focuses on getting to the bottom of behavioural issues which, if left unchecked, will further increase the learning, social, and economic gaps for young people in care as they get older.

Key outcomes of the Little Stars Learners program

- **Improved engagement:** Young people are motivated to participate in their education, showing increased school attendance, enthusiasm for learning, and academic progress.
- **Enhanced confidence and wellbeing:** Through consistent support, young people gain confidence and experience positive changes in their mental health, leading to improved behaviour at home and in school.
- **Strengthened care placements:** By reducing conflicts over homework and school issues, our program fosters more harmonious household environments, reducing the risk of placement breakdowns and ultimately over-reliance on residential care.
- **Carer support:** Carers benefit from a reduction in stress and feel more confident in their caregiving roles, with a deeper understanding of trauma-informed strategies that improve the lives of the young people in their care.
- **Enhanced community understanding of trauma:** Learning Support Mentors gain valuable experience, developing skills in trauma-informed practices that positively impact their careers in education and beyond.
- **Assisting teachers and schools by improving young people's engagement:** Working one on one with young people who have fallen behind to get them up to speed with the curriculum ultimately has flow on benefits for teachers and other young people in the classroom.

Key outcomes of the Little Stars Learners program

The Little Stars Learners program is not only transforming lives but is also delivering a high return on investment. For every \$1 invested, \$5.60 in social and economic value is generated, benefiting young people, carers, the education system, and the Queensland community.

An independent Social Return on Investment Analysis completed by Lumenia in September 2024 (www.lumenia.com.au) reveals the following:



This powerful return highlights the significant impact of the Little Stars Learners program in addressing the educational challenges faced by young people in care, creating lasting benefits for individuals and society.

By investing in these young lives, we are breaking the cycle of disadvantage, giving young people in care the opportunity to succeed in school and beyond. Together, we can create a brighter, more hopeful future.







Little Stars Learners[®] is a comprehensive and trauma-informed learning and well-being intervention

- In-home learning and wellbeing support, and mentoring
- Collaboratively supports teachers and schools
- Addresses curriculum gaps as a result of challenges of being a young person in care
- Minimises behaviour-based exclusions from school
- Improves positive involvement in the classroom
- Supports foster and kinship carers and the placement and improves placement stability
- One-on-one tailored support
- Creates a love of learning
- One-year commitment weekly to create real change
- Relationship-based
- Trauma-informed and trauma-responsive
- Collaborative approach involving all stakeholders involved in the young person's care
- Builds confidence and self-esteem
- Focus on maths and English as key components to success



Designed for young people who have experienced complex childhood trauma

We understand the challenges young people face when they've experienced complex childhood trauma and how to work with these young people to improve outcomes.

-  **CONNECT:** By establishing a deep connection first, we ensure that our learners feel seen, heard, and valued - laying the groundwork for transformative educational experiences.
-  **ENGAGE:** Through a blend of fun, games, and flexibility, we're able to foster a love for learning that lasts a lifetime.
-  **LINK:** Every activity, game, and lesson is linked to the Queensland school curriculum. While our learners are having fun, they're also making progress towards key educational milestones.
-  **COLLABORATE:** We engage with carers, teachers, CSO's and others supporting the young person to achieve optimal outcomes.
-  **EXCITE:** We believe every young person holds the potential for greatness. By tapping into their hopes, dreams, goals, and desires, our program helps them achieve their personal best.
-  **SUPPORT:** We support the young person and their carer, so that they don't feel alone in the educational journey.

Who can apply

We accept applications from:

- Department of Child Safety
- Schools
- Foster and kinship agencies
- Carers
- Other stakeholders supporting young people living in foster, kinship and residential care.

Organisations or individuals may apply for a young person to join the Little Stars Learners Program if the criteria for applying are met.

Foster and kinship carers can approach their CSO or foster agency to enquire as to whether funding might be available to assist a young person in their care to join the program.

Applications are submitted on our website www.littlestarsfoundation.org.au with all accompanying reports.

Enrolment criteria

- ✓ The young person ideally will be in **prep to Grade 9**. Young people in the later years of high school will be considered. Early Childhood applications will also be considered
- ✓ Young people should be **in a stable out of home care placement**
- ✓ Young people must reside (and have the sessions) within the wider **Brisbane, Gold Coast, Ipswich or Toowoomba** area. Online sessions are available outside of these areas.
- ✓ Must be able to commit to **4-term** participation in the program to ensure consistent and measurable improvement.
- ✓ Carer or other responsible adult must be able to **provide supervision and a safe quiet space** for their sessions to occur.

Our stories



P has a few learning difficulties when it comes to his academic achievements at school. His handwriting in particular, was quite poor, and his executive functioning skills also required a high level of support. He also experienced difficulties in sequencing, especially with maths.

Our Learning Support Mentor uses his teachers' semester goals for the class and feedback from parent-teacher interviews to focus on areas of improvement for him. This feedback is welcomed by his support mentor, and she makes their weekly sessions not only educational and challenging but also fun and tailored to his interests to get him to focus and engage with her.

You can see his confidence and self-worth grow as he completes tasks and is praised for his efforts. P has adopted a love of learning new things through researching in books and has a very strong interest in the army and defence forces.

J is a young person with multiple diagnoses and trauma. He loved school but, unfortunately, was expelled in grade 3. He felt rejected by the world and fell into a dark place. It was not possible for him to attend school. He was placed on a medical exemption for 12 months. No schoolwork was provided.

Our Learning Support Mentors had a hard job. He called himself the worst kid in Australia. There was work avoidance, meltdowns, etc. Picking up a pencil often triggered him. They had to gain trust and be creative in their approaches to engage him. This meant using play and focusing learning on his interests.

J's reading significantly improved. He asked for books I thought were too advanced, but he could read them.

They introduced him to new topics which he found fascinating. He found the confidence to attempt work. This was huge. Previously, if he didn't know an answer he would punch himself in the face. His Learning Support Mentors showed him he is capable. Their positive energy and belief in him helped change his opinion of himself and prepared him to return to school. He is now in grade 6 through distance education with passing grades. His Little Stars support mentor is there every week to encourage and assist him with schoolwork. His teachers have noticed improvements too.



Our stories



Before the Learning Support Sessions, the young people struggled to keep up with their peers in the classroom and socially in the playground. J has been diagnosed with a receptive language disorder which means she often doesn't understand information that is delivered verbally, and because of her low self-confidence, she never asked for clarification and so sat in class feeling overwhelmed.

Since taking part in the Little Stars Learners program, her teacher told me at the last parent-teacher interview that J is now actively asking questions and seeking clarification in class. This means she is not only understanding more of the classroom content but also gaining confidence.

Even though my husband and I have worked hard with P with homework and extra activities to strengthen his new skills, his Learning Support Mentor Megan has formed such a lovely relationship with him. She supports and challenges his learning by using his interests and strengths and will often bring personalised activities for P to complete with her. We always look forward to her session summaries to see his progress through their sessions together.

I feel without this program, P would not have been as advanced as his schoolteacher has reported to us in the last few weeks. Thank you kindly. We are looking forward to next year and hopefully, Megan can continue her hard work with P.



WHAT FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS SAY



"Brilliant concept. It is almost expected that kids in care will have poorer educational outcomes.

Little Stars Learners ensures kids in care are not left behind"



"It is helping him re-engage with learning. There are other learning support services **but with this one there is no judgement about his school situation or behaviour."**



"He does poorly in a classroom but is **engaged during his learning sessions**. He has learnt to read analogue clocks independently and **excitedly does set homework"**



"This program is **amazing** and I am so thankful to all involved!"



The skills and knowledge she has learnt and continues to learn during her sessions will spread across all other aspects of her life moving forward and will **teach her not to give up!**



I attribute the **support and guidance** from one-on-one Learning Support Sessions (with a Support Mentor who she adores) to her new resilience to take on the challenge.

Agency feedback



Shelley Wall
Chief Executive Officer

“The young people thoroughly enjoy the program, and most importantly, **all experience significant gains in their learning and academic results.** Given the widely reported disadvantages young people in care experience with respect to their educational achievements, the program is significant in helping to improve the outcomes for those who participate in the program. Their carers also report the significant benefits of the program, including the exceptional support and relationships the young people were able to develop with their Learning Support Mentor. “



Margaret Hughes
Education Officer

“The education support opportunity provided to young people supported through Key Assets Fostering has been the best! It’s been reliable, professional and, of great importance, it has been delivered by educators who are ‘trauma-informed’. **This makes Little Stars Learning & Wellbeing Support stand out from other possibilities....** ...One thirteen year old boy who began the year working at a Prep level has recently been assessed to be working at a Year 4 level. I do believe that the Learning Support Mentor’s individual attention, interest in the boy and his interests, encouragement and celebration of his successes have been pivotal and influential mechanisms contributing to this achievement.“



Martin Greller
Regional Director

“The Little Stars Learners Program is helping address a **significant need and gap for young people in care who are often unable to fully engage and learn** in the classroom setting, without additional support.

Learning & Wellbeing Support by qualified and trauma-informed Learning Support Mentors in the child’s home is really important and can enable a young person to feel confident; to ask questions to aid their learning at a pace that works for them; and for the lessons to be tailored to match their development.“

Program investment for 2025

Little Stars Learners operates on a fee for service basis*

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1 x 1-hour session per week

ANNUAL COMMITMENT per annum (36 weeks)

\$4,048 (including GST)

Total cost of program per annum	In excess of \$6,000
Little Stars Foundation contribution*	Approximately \$2,000
Carer / Funder (out-of-pocket) annual commitment required	\$4,048 including GST

We also offer 1.5hr and 2hr sessions where required. Please ask us about the additional costs.



**Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors and donors, Little Stars Foundation is currently able to subsidise around 30% of the total cost of the program per annum. A limited number of full scholarships are also available to eligible young people unable to obtain funding elsewhere. However, this will be subject to funding availability and decided in mid-late November each year.*

Payment Options

You can select from the following Little Stars Learners payment options:

Upfront payment

Little Stars will send an invoice for the full 4-term learning and wellbeing support program fee upfront.

The program can be funded through Foster Agencies or the Department of Child Safety.

Payment of annual fee by installment

In circumstances where upfront payment is not available via Department of Child Safety or Foster Agencies, the annual fee may be paid by the foster or kinship carer via installments through the CSNA or HSNA.

Fortnightly installment payments do not directly align with weekly session costs and cannot be refunded or stopped. Missed sessions are entitled to be made up before December 2025.

How to enrol

STEP ONE



Apply for program funding through your foster agency, Department of Child Safety

STEP TWO



Once funding is approved, [CLICK HERE](#) to submit your online application form or alternatively scan the QR code below

STEP THREE



Young person will become a Little Stars Learner and build self-esteem, confidence, create stronger numeracy and literacy skills

Scan QR code to submit online application form



Frequently asked questions

Q - Who can enrol a young person in Little Stars Learners?

We accept applications from the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, foster agencies, schools and residential care providers. Organisations may apply for young people to join the Little Stars Learners Program if the criteria for applying are met. Carers can approach their CSO or foster agency to enquire as to whether funding might be available. Carers can also privately fund the program or pay the annual fee by installments via the CSNA or HSNA.

Q – How is the program funded?

Funding for the program is upfront for the full 4 terms of the year through either the Department of Child Safety or Foster Agencies or through the young people's school. Limited scholarships are available each year through the Little Stars Foundation if all avenues of alternative funding have been exhausted.

Q – What age group is best suited to the program?

Research shows that early intervention provides the best outcomes for education for young people living in out-of-home care. The key is to ensure that young people are not left behind at an early stage as the gap widens as young people progress to older grades, resulting in disengagement and an inability to keep up in the classroom.

Q – How long is the program?

Four (4) school terms commencing in January each year. Late applications to the program may be accepted pending Learning Support Mentor availability up to the end of Term 1 of the school year.

Q – What session frequency is best for primary aged young people?

1 hour per week has been shown to deliver optimum outcomes for the young people without overwhelming them.

Q - How do you match Learning Support Mentors?

Once enrolled, we will ask questions and conduct assessments to identify the best Learning Support Mentor for each young person. We consider the complex needs of the young person and any particular learning styles or challenges, to select the right Learning Support Mentor.

Frequently asked questions

Q - Do we receive regular reports?

Yes. Learning Support Mentors complete detailed session summaries each week. These are emailed to the Carer, Foster Agency contacts, Child Safety Officer, teacher and our program manager who manages the journey of the young person and collaborates with all those involved with the young persons journey. More comprehensive Semester Reports are also provided.

Q - Do Learning Support Mentors hold valid and current Blue Cards?

Yes. All Learning Support Mentors have completed the relevant Queensland checks and hold valid Blue Cards.

Q – How are Learning Support Mentors trained?

Our Learning Support Mentors are all experienced university students or graduates, often with a focus on psychology and/or education. Our Learning Support Mentors are passionate about working with young people who have experienced trauma and have a key focus on bringing fun and building a positive and supportive relationship. This relationship is fundamental to the success of the program.

All Learning Support Mentors undergo comprehensive training and understand the impact of trauma on the cognitive, emotional, and social functioning of young people and how to work with neurodivergent learners and young people with complex needs. They understand that providing a sense of connection and relational safety is critical to creating a positive learning environment.

Our Learning Support Mentors undergo continuous professional development and have the support of our psychologist and educational consultants to maximise outcomes for our young people.

Q - Does somebody need to supervise the session?

Yes. A carer or youth worker needs to sign an agreement upfront committing to having a responsible adult available to supervise each session. That person can be carer, another responsible adult or youth worker. Little Stars foundation is deeply committed to being a child safe organisation. A quiet space must be provided free from distractions and other young people or technology.



Contact us



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www.littlestarsfoundation.org.au

Scan QR code to visit our
website or download an
Information Kit



*The Little Stars Learners Program is an initiative of Little Stars
Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation
www.littlestarsfoundation.org.au*