Foster and kinship care

Types of Care

Every day nearly 5,000 foster and kinship carers open their hearts and homes to children and young people who are unable to live with their families because of abuse or neglect.

Foster and kinship carers look after children who are likely to be returned to their family when it is safe to do so, as well as children requiring a permanent home elsewhere.

Foster and kinship carers are the backbone of Queensland’s child protection system. Without their kindness, generosity and dedication, we could not provide safe and caring homes for children most in need of support.

Being a foster or kinship carer is a very special responsibility. Foster and kinship carers can be individuals, a couple, or a group of adults who share the same household. All sorts of people of different ages, backgrounds and family circumstances are foster and kinship carers.

Foster and kinship care is not a ‘one size fits all’ role. Every child has unique needs, so requires a different type of care. A foster or kinship carer may have special skills or preferences that will affect the type of care they provide.

With this in mind, there are a number of roles within foster and kinship care for consideration.

**Respite care**

Respite care can help children feel more connected to their community, while also providing foster and kinship carers with a short break.

Being a respite carer is an option for people who can provide short-term care, but may not be able to provide ongoing, day-to-day care for a child.

Respite carers choose when they can provide care, for example, on weekends or holidays. New carers may start out as respite carers and become a full-time foster or kinship carer after gaining some experience.

This experience can provide a good basis for transition to a full-time carer role.

*John and Laura are busy professionals who both work full-time and have two children in high school. They decided to become respite carers and now provide regular care on weekends and school holidays for Jack (five years old).*

**Emergency care**

Emergency carers are available to provide short-term care at short notice for children who urgently need a place to stay.

Emergency care may be required when a child first comes into care, or if they need a home while they transition to longer-term care.
Emergency carers are often experienced, with skills in helping children who have experienced abuse and trauma.

Some carers may consider becoming emergency carers once they have some experience of foster care.

*Tyrone (eight years old) and Sarah (six years old) needed a safe place to stay at very short notice. They were placed with emergency carers Matt and Lisa for three days while the department arranged a longer-term placement.*

**Short-term care**

Short-term carers are full-time foster and kinship carers who provide ongoing, day-to-day care for children for up to two years, while the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women is working towards reunifying the child with their family.

Being a short-term carer means actively working with the child and the department to progress the child’s case plan, so that the child can be safely returned to their parents.

Short-term carers are responsible for maintaining regular contact between the child and their family.

*Jessica (four years old) came into care because she was neglected and was placed with foster carer Margaret. She could not safely be left at home. Margaret cared for Jessica full-time for eighteen months while Jessica’s parents were undergoing support to enhance their skills to safely care for her. Margaret worked as part of a team with Jessica, her family, the department and other relevant services to safely return Jessica to her parents, when they had demonstrated the ability to protect her from neglect.*

**Long-term care**

Long-term care gives children a safe and stable home because they cannot live with their family.

Long-term carers commit to the ongoing full-time care of a child up to 18 years of age.

*Paul and Alison are in their early forties and have been unable to have children. They are interested in caring for a sibling group on a long-term basis. The department placed Luke (five years old) and Alicia (six years old) with them.*

*Luke and Alicia have been in care since they were six months and 18 months of age respectively, due to their mother’s long-term mental illness. Paul and Alison facilitate contact between the children and their mother, when it can occur, a few times each year.*

**Intensive foster care**

Intensive foster carer is a type of care for children with complex and extreme levels of support needs.

Carers receive additional training and support from an intensive foster care service to help meet the needs of children in their care.

*Peter is a 14 year old boy who has a learning disability. He receives intensive support from foster carers Brad and Melissa and a team of support workers to meet his health, educational and day-to-day care needs.*
like additional information or resources:

• call the Foster Carer Recruitment Line on 1300 550 877
• visit https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/child-family
• contact your local child safety service centre
• you can also contact Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (a non-government organisation for carers) on 3256 6166.