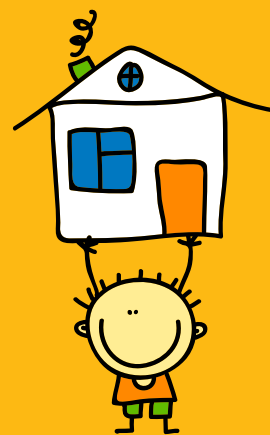


Information for people interested in becoming a

# Foster Carer in the ACT



## What is foster care?

Our community values our children and young people and provides parents with the supports and assistance to care and provide for the needs of their children and young people. For some children and young people, foster carers provide the necessary care for their healthy development. Foster care is an arrangement where a foster carer looks after a child or young person, sometimes up to 18 years of age, in their own home.

## Why do children and young people need foster care?

Children and young people need foster care because they are unable to live safely at home and have no relatives or friends to care for them.

Children and young people may enter care for a variety of reasons including abuse or neglect or because their parents need time to work on their capacity to provide safe care to their children.

In some situations children display challenging behaviours due to the trauma they have experienced. Assisting the child or young person manage these behaviours is one of the challenges a foster carer may face.

The care, commitment and support children and young people receive from their foster carers is essential to their healthy development and well being. Carers provide structure and stability and give children and young people positive experiences.

## Who can be a foster carer?

Foster carers are members of the community who have a commitment to helping others, especially children and young people. Foster carers are adults who relate well to children or young people and are committed to meeting their needs. Carers may be male, female, single or couples. Carers need to have suitable and safe accommodation to meet a child or young person's needs, access to a car and a telephone.

*The Children and Young People Act 2008* requires foster carers to be approved as suitable to provide services for a child or young person. The approval process will include:

- a criminal records check
- an assessment of your capacity to care for children or young people
- attendance at training
- impact of fostering on other family members within the home

- assessing the suitability of the home environment for a child or young person
- medical checks
- a check of child protection records
- check with referees provided.

## What qualities should a foster carer have?

The following are qualities that ensure children and young people receive a positive foster care experience:

- tolerance, flexibility and a non-judgemental approach
- an ability to care for children and young people from a variety of backgrounds
- maintaining a stable and balanced lifestyle
- emotionally and physically able to manage any difficulties or set-backs
- loving, kind, caring and respectful to children and young people
- able to balance the needs of the child in care with the needs of their own family
- mature and able to understand the individual needs of children who are experiencing grief following their separation from their parents
- able to take an unknown child into their care
- ensures the children in their care are protected from potential dangers
- sets boundaries and house-rules to help children feel secure
- has a well developed personal support network
- is able to help a child maintain their connection to significant people
- accepts involvement and support from their agency and Care and Protection Services
- is able to work as part of a support team with professionals.

## What support is available for foster carers?

Agencies value their foster carers and their families and are committed to supporting carers in a variety of ways. The supports offered include:

- initial and ongoing training
- casework support
- 24 hour telephone support
- payment of a financial subsidy to assist with the cost of care
- contact with other carers.

## How will fostering affect my family and friends?

Fostering will affect everyone who lives in the home and your extended family and friends who visit regularly. You will need to discuss your interest in fostering with your family and friends. Include your immediate family in the process as it is important that they understand why you want to do this and need to be willing to assist and support you and the child or young person in your care. Foster caring is a team effort involving your family, the agency you work with, Care and Protection Services, the child or young person's family and other support services involved with the child or young person.

## What do foster carers do?

Foster carers provide for the needs of children or young people in their care as they would other children in their family. Many of these needs are easily taken for granted such as a warm bed, regular meals, help with homework, a nurturing environment, admiration and pride in what the children achieve, loving care and stability. This helps a child feel safe and secure while separated from their parents.

A foster carers role is at times demanding, stressful and challenging. The role includes:

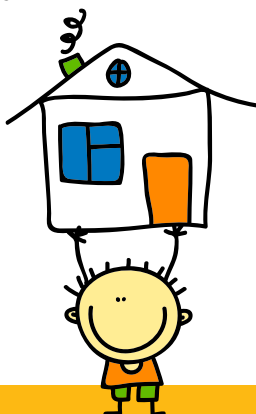
- managing the effects of early childhood trauma with the child or young person in care
- understanding the legal system within which care is provided
- providing ongoing advocacy for the services needed by an individual child or young person
- supporting the child or young person to maintain contact with their parents and extended family members
- maintaining the language and culture of the child or young person's family.

## How do I become a foster carer?

Care and Protection Services is part of the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and contract four non-government agencies to provide out of home care (foster care) services within the ACT.

These agencies are:

- Barnardos
- Galilee
- Life Without Barriers
- Marymead.



To become a foster carer, you should approach one of these agencies to apply to be a registered foster carer. Foster carers can only register with one agency at a time. The agency will undertake an assessment of your family situation and make recommendations about your suitability to provide foster care to Care and Protection Services.

If you are found suitable, Care and Protection Services will approve your application and give you an authority to be a carer.

Agency contact details:

**Barnardos**  
PO Box 384  
Dickson ACT 2602  
Ph 02 6228 9500  
[www.barnardos.org.au](http://www.barnardos.org.au)

**Galilee**  
PO Box 205  
Mawson ACT 2607  
Ph 02 6290 2191  
[www.galilee.org.au](http://www.galilee.org.au)

**Life Without Barriers**  
PO Box 689  
Mitchell ACT 2911  
Ph 02 6129 7200  
[www.lwb.org.au](http://www.lwb.org.au)

**Marymead**  
PO Box 4260  
Kingston ACT 2604  
Ph 02 6162 5854  
[www.marymead.org.au](http://www.marymead.org.au)

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kinship and Foster Care Service within the Department provides foster care and kinship care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kinship and Foster Care Service

PO Box 158  
Canberra City  
ACT 2601  
Ph: 02 6205 4798  
[www.dhcs.act.gov.au](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au)

If you would like to speak to a foster carer about their own experiences or would like more information, you may contact the Foster Care Association ACT on 6232 1822 or visit their website: [www.fcaact.org.au](http://www.fcaact.org.au)

## Further information

For further information please contact the Department's Carer Liaison Officer on phone: 6205 8357 or at [carerliaisonofficer@act.gov.au](mailto:carerliaisonofficer@act.gov.au).  
[www.dhcs.act.gov.au](http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au)

