

The Uniting Foster Care team connects foster carers with children and young people who aren't able to live in their family home, and who have high support needs due to experiences of abuse, trauma, illness or disability.

About foster care.

Every child deserves a happy home.

Foster carers are people from all walks of life. You might be single or married, with or without your own children. Some carers have fostering experience or work with children, while others are looking for new challenges and opportunities. Two things they have in common are an abundance of love and a willingness to share it.

Evidence shows that children thrive when they're in a safe and supportive family environment where they can form meaningful relationships.

We believe that all children have the right to feel safe, and to grow and develop in a family environment with access to stable, consistent and nurturing care. This support becomes even more critical when the child has high support needs and lives with a history of trauma from neglect or abuse.

Children and young people who have experienced trauma due to abuse or neglect often show a range of complex behaviours that develop over time as a survival mechanism. These trauma-based behaviours need a trauma-informed response that's different to the typical response you might expect from parents in everyday settings.

As a Uniting foster carer, you'll be supported to understand what your child has experienced and respond in a nurturing and positive way, so that you and the child or young person you support will thrive.

Email
**fostercare@
unitingwa.org.au**

Or call us on
1300 663 298



Uniting

Qualities of a foster carer

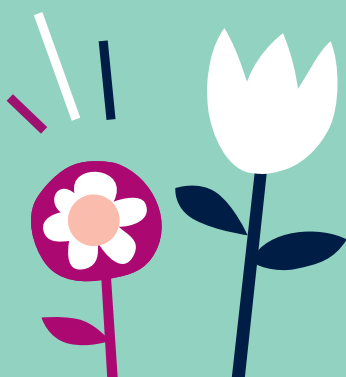
Foster carers are patient, compassionate and empathetic, but they need to be resilient too. They're the kind of people who regulate their emotions well and have a good sense of humour. They don't sweat the small stuff.

Uniting foster carers are able to:

- Work therapeutically with children and young people who have experienced trauma
- Develop the specific skills needed to provide support for a child with complex care needs
- Commit to nurturing and supporting the growth of a child to their full potential
- Help a child see their own strengths and build on them
- Work as part of a team, seeking and accepting support
- Reflect on their own beliefs, values and life experiences and understand how they support or challenge the child in their care
- Promote the rights of the child or young person in their care.

“For me, it’s helped me grow as a person. I constantly get rewards from the children, watching them grow, watching them improve.”

Uniting foster carer



Your role as a foster carer

It's a foster carer's role to meet the specific and sometimes complex needs of the child or young person they support. This includes things like:

- Providing a safe, reliable and consistent level of care
- Having an awareness and understanding of the child's experiences
- Treating the child with dignity and respect, and upholding confidentiality at all times
- Providing care that meets the child's physical, emotional, social and educational needs
- Responding in a trauma-informed way that promotes healing in a child who has experienced abuse or neglect
- Health management including monitoring medical needs and attending appointments, as well as administering medication and using medical equipment
- Physical care that might include feeding, toileting, bathing and dressing
- Input into therapy programs that relate to communication, mobility and independent living skills
- Supporting the child's interests including hobbies, sport, music, dance and art
- Supporting the development of a child's sense of family identity and culture
- Providing advocacy support and contributing to future planning
- Working in partnership with Uniting and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS), as well as other people who provide care for the child including schools, the Health Department and therapy teams.





“I find it the most rewarding, wonderful experience I’ve ever participated in...to know I’ve changed a child’s life and direction in life. To see him achieve and to give him tools and to see him use those tools is brilliant and I’d do it again in a heartbeat.”

Uniting foster carer

Foster care is a partnership

Long-term and short-break foster carers sit at the core of teams – which include therapists, case workers, medical professionals and schools – who work together to provide wrap-around support for a child or young person. Foster carers are the primary person responsible for meeting the child or young person’s day-to-day support needs and providing therapeutic care when it’s needed. This requires ongoing commitment and impacts each family in different ways.

As a foster carer with Uniting, we’ll partner with you and provide the support, guidance and training you need to provide long-term and short-break care that’s informed by an understanding of trauma. This includes access to training about trauma, attachment, grief and loss. If you’re the carer of a child or young person who lives with disability, you’ll get the specialised training you need to provide for the specific support needs of that child.

We’ll support you every step of the way

Supporting a young person to develop to their full potential is one of the most rewarding things you’ll ever do. It can also be challenging sometimes, but you’re not alone. Short-break (respite) care is an important part of each foster care placement, and positive working relationships with other key people involved are critical to providing a supportive environment where a child can have a positive, life-changing experience.

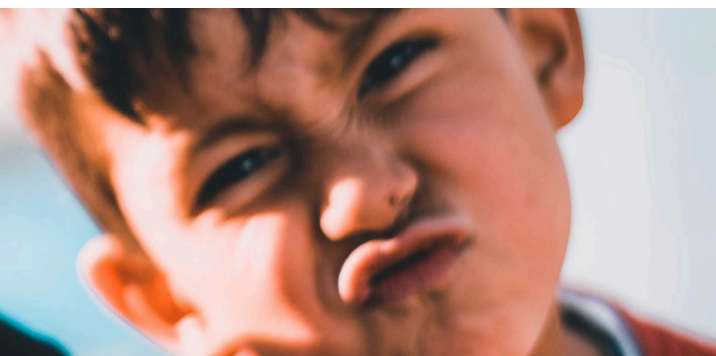
Foster carers often provide ongoing support to a child or young person until they turn 18. After they turn 18, some young people choose to continue to receive ongoing therapeutic support from Uniting.

Working with your Uniting support team

The Uniting Foster Care team will stay in regular contact and support you to promote the child or young person’s safety and wellbeing. We’ll work alongside you and other people involved in the child’s care, like schools and government departments.

In return, we ask that you keep us informed about:

- How the child or young person is progressing, so we can support you to promote decision-making that’s in the child’s best interests
- Any changes in your own life that might have an impact on the care you provide to the child or your ability to remain an approved carer
- Anything that might affect the child, including incidents and emergencies.



Respite for foster carers

It's important for foster carers to maintain their own good health and wellbeing, and regular short (respite) breaks are an essential part of long-term foster care placements. Short breaks are particularly important where a child or young person has high support needs due to illness or disability or challenging behaviour due to the trauma they've experienced.

These breaks allow foster carers to recharge their batteries and take time out for themselves and other members of their family. They also provide an opportunity for a child to develop relationships and connections outside of their usual support network, which helps them develop a sense of independence and connection with community.

Short breaks are usually planned and regular, but they can also be arranged in an emergency situation or crisis in the full-time foster carer's family. Our team will support you to arrange the respite breaks you need.

Financial support

You'll also be supported financially with a monthly reimbursement to cover the costs of caring for a child or young person with complex support needs. All reimbursements are based on the individual needs of the child you support, so you won't be left out of pocket. The financial support provided often allows Uniting foster carers to commit to fostering on a full-time basis.

Email
fostercare@unitingwa.org.au

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Or visit us at
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Legal Guardianship

As a foster carer, you're the person who provides the majority of day-to-day support. And while you have significant responsibility for the child or young person, DCPFS are the legal Guardian of the child or young person in your care.

Sometimes it can be difficult for foster carers to maintain a healthy balance between forming attachment with a child – which is critical – and understanding that they aren't the primary decision-maker for that child. Ultimate responsibility for the child sits with DCPFS as the legal Guardian.

This is a complex role that needs foster carers to work in a way that promotes positive relationships and attachment, but also upholds the status of the legal Guardian and the team involved in the child's care.

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