

Becoming a foster carer.

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.

Email
fostercare@unitingwa.org.au

Or call us on
1300 663 298



Application and assessment process

- 1 Register your interest and review the Uniting Foster Care information pack
- 2 Meet a member of the Uniting Foster Care team to discuss your interest
- 3 Fill out the application form
- 4 Assessment process starts
- 5 Foster care approval panel (applicant attends)
- 6 Outcome of panel decision
- 7 Discuss placement options

Foster carer eligibility criteria

Age, income and relationship status aren't the most important factors in determining whether you can become a foster carer. Uniting foster carers are people who are:



Australian citizens or permanent residents



Have sufficient income to meet their own basic needs



Able to provide a safe, secure and stable home environment



Able to successfully complete background checks including police clearances and Working With Children.



Of sound health

5 steps to becoming a Uniting foster carer.

1. Application

When you apply to become a Uniting foster carer, we'll ask you questions so we can get to know you better. These questions will be about you, your home, your health and your motivation to become a foster carer.

You'll also need to provide names and contact details of some personal and professional referees who our team can contact as part of the application process.

Once we receive your application form, we'll review it and allocate it to a Uniting case worker who will complete the referee, medical and information checks. The case worker will keep you informed of the status of your application and let you know if you're eligible to progress to the competency-based assessment stage.

Please be aware that all applicants have the same eligibility criteria and experience the same assessment process. You can choose to withdraw your application at any time.

2. Assessment

The assessment process normally takes between 15 and 20 hours, with assessments normally happening at your home during a number of visits. We can also host assessment sessions at our office.

Foster care key competencies

Before you're approved as a Uniting foster carer, you'll be assessed against five competencies under the Children and Community Services Regulations 2006 Act.

1. An ability to provide a safe living environment for a child.
2. An ability to provide care for a child in a way that promotes the wellbeing of the child, promotes the child's family and interpersonal relationships and protects the child from harm.
3. An ability to work cooperatively with Department of Child Protection Family Support officers, a child's family and other people when providing care for a child.
4. An ability to take responsibility for the development of the child's competency and skills as a carer.
5. A person of good character and repute.

As well as meeting key competencies, you'll need to complete mandatory 'Fostering with Skill and Care' training provided by the Department of Child Protection Family Support (DCPFS). This face-to-face training is provided as modules in evenings and on weekends, and takes 19 hours to complete. For people who live in rural and regional areas, the training can be provided online.





3. Approval and registration

If your assessor recommends you for foster care, a foster care assessment panel will meet to discuss your assessment and make a recommendation about your application. They might approve you or not approve you, or they might ask for more information or clarification. The final decision about approving an application sits with the Uniting Foster Care team.

Once the panel and approval process has been completed, notification of the outcome will be provided to the Department for Child Protection and Family Support Foster Carer Directory of Western Australia (the Directory). The Directory has been established to provide a central database of foster carers who provide care to children under the legal Guardianship of the DCPFS.

Uniting is required to record information in the Directory including:

- All foster carer applications
- The result of each application
- New carer registrations
- Changes to a person's carer status or personal circumstances.

We'll provide the relevant information to the Directory on your behalf once you provide your consent for us to do so.

You have the right to appeal the decision of the panel or raise concerns you might have about the process or outcome at any time during the assessment process. If you're unsatisfied with the response you receive, you can provide formal feedback or make a complaint in writing. For more information and resources visit uniting.org.au/contact-us.



4. Training

As a foster carer with Uniting, you'll have access to a range of training opportunities that will support you to focus on the child or young person's individual needs. You'll learn how to understand the impact of trauma and safely and therapeutically respond to children who have experienced abuse and neglect.

Training covers things like:

- Trauma and attachment
- Grief and loss
- Therapeutic parenting and crisis intervention
- Medication training
- Challenging behaviours and positive support strategies
- Manual handling
- First aid.

We understand that everyone likes to learn in different ways, which is why training is available face-to-face and online, in groups and 1 to 1. We're happy to work with you and adapt to your preferred learning style.

5. Ongoing support

It's a big responsibility to provide foster care for a child or young person, but you're never alone. The Uniting Foster Care team will provide ongoing guidance and training that will support you and the child in your care to thrive. This includes a dedicated Uniting Case Worker who will provide day-to-day support, and access to a therapeutic coach.

Support is also provided through regular contact including:

- Phone consultations
- Monthly in-home visits
- 6 and 12 monthly care planning meetings with DCPFS
- Appointment support
- Training and development opportunities.

Experts who will support you to care for a child or young person include:

- Therapists (e.g. speech, occupational, physio)
- Medical specialists
- Psychologists
- Psychiatrists
- Trauma therapists
- Behaviour management teams
- Educators (schools).

You'll also be supported 24/7 with access to the Uniting after hours support service.

Financial support

As a Uniting foster carer, you'll receive monthly reimbursements to cover the costs of caring for a child or young person with complex needs. All reimbursements are based on the individual needs of the child or young person. These reimbursements often allow Uniting foster carers to commit to fostering on a full-time basis.

Short-break (respite) carers also receive a reimbursement towards the cost of supporting a child or young person while they're in their care.

Visit us at
unitingwa.org.au

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