

Foster carers are as different as the young lives they transform

Information about foster care



Care Pathways
- finding paths to
brighter futures



Many different kinds of people make good foster carers, but the most important qualities are the desire to help a child in need and the dedication to meet the challenges.

Our foster carers range from couples in their twenties to sole carers in their sixties. They come from different backgrounds and live in different places.

You don't have to make a long-term commitment to be a foster carer. We also need short-term and part-time carers.

Why become a foster carer?

As a foster carer you will have a vital role in transforming a child's life. Foster carers are the backbone of our child protection system, caring for children who have come from situations of abuse or neglect.

You will provide consistency, stability and the bonds of trust that many of these children have sadly been denied.

Foster care can take on many different forms, from respite care to specialist and kinship care. We provide professional training to foster carers as well as an ongoing support program.

Our hope is that the children will be reunited with their families as soon as possible and you will play an important role in this process, through encouraging ongoing relationships between children and their families.

Becoming a foster carer is a challenging role but also a very rewarding one. You can make a difference if you have a place in your heart and in your home.

About Care

Pathways

Care Pathways provides a range of services for children and young people who are under the care of the Queensland Department of Child Safety or at risk of being taken into care. We also deliver specialist services to support the needs of the child safety sector.

Our services include foster care, residential care, semi-independent transition from care, assessment and intervention, training, and kinship and foster carer assessment.

The first Care Pathways' service began in 1970. We now have approximately 550 children in foster care and every year we help more than 2,500 children.

We offer extensive support and training to our staff and carers to help ensure a better future for children and young people at risk.

The service is part of Churches of Christ Care.



Types of foster care

Foster carers are needed for different ages of children and young people, for different periods of time.

Care Pathways' range of foster care services include:

Foster care

Foster care provides full-time or part-time family based care in your home for a child or children who are in desperate need of a safe environment. These children may have come from backgrounds of abuse and neglect, and need a stable and loving environment. The timeframes vary and can range from a few days to many years.

Kinship care

Kinship care involves a member of the extended family or someone important to the child providing care to children who are no longer able to live with their parents. This style of foster care reflects the individual needs of children and young people, enabling them to retain connections with their family, community, language and culture.

In selected locations we also offer:

Specialist care

Specialist care involves providing a safe and nurturing environment for a young person with challenging behaviours and circumstances. This challenging behaviour has typically resulted from a history of significant abuse or neglect. Care Pathways specialist foster carers are trained and supported by professional therapists and youth workers. Perseverance, remaining calm under pressure and the ability to help the young person re-establish trust and hope are necessary traits for specialist foster carers.

Connect care

Connect care offers respite care that gives you the opportunity to be an important part of a child's life and gives their primary foster carers a break. By taking in children for weekends, holiday periods or on a regular fortnightly, monthly or occasional basis, this type of foster care helps maintain a sense of security for young people and also gives them another social network and new experiences.

Connect carers work closely with the primary carers to make sure there are similar rules and expectations of behaviour. As a Connect carer, you will be assessed and trained in the same way as a full-time Pathways foster carer.


Who can be a foster carer?

Everyday people from all walks of life can become foster carers. The most important requirement for any potential foster carer is a commitment to the best outcomes for the child, and a willingness to work within the formal requirements of the fostering process.

If you have the open-heartedness and stability to welcome a child into your home, you could help transform a young life.

Care Pathways welcomes foster carers of different ages and backgrounds, partners or sole carers, men and women, with existing children or without.

Meet Sam ...



"I went to live with Don and Noela when I was 12 years old. They gave me a loving home where I had my own room and they made me feel safe and accepted.

Now I am part of Don and Noela's family, along with their three other children, who are like brothers and sisters to me. I am now 15 and I'm doing really well at school, have a part-time job and play soccer on weekends. Don comes to watch me play every Saturday and I can hear him cheering on the sideline.

I am Sam, and Don and Noela are my foster carers."

Please help a child

- register your interest today

In Queensland there is currently nearly double the number of children and young people needing care as there are foster carers available. These children really need your help.

We would be pleased to tell you more about becoming a foster carer and answer any other questions you have. If you think you could welcome a child into your home for some weekends, a month or longer term please visit our website www.carepathwaysqld.com.au or call Care Pathways in your local area.

Brisbane West

(servicing Centenary, Inala & Logan communities)

Phone: 07 3451 5800

Email: pwbrisbanewest@cofcqld.com.au

Bundaberg

Phone: 07 4152 0709

Email: pwbundaberg@cofcqld.com.au

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Fraser Coast

Phone: 07 4120 0600

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Mount Isa

Phone: 07 4740 1333

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South East

(servicing Beenleigh & Gold Coast communities)

Phone: 07 3451 5800

Email: pwsoutheast@cofcqld.com.au

South West

(servicing Ipswich & Goodna communities)

Phone: 07 3282 5401

Email: pwbundamba@cofcqld.com.au

Townsville

(servicing Thuringowa & Ingham communities)

Phone: 07 4755 6888

Email: pwtownsville@cofcqld.com.au

Challenges and rewards

Caring for children and young people at a difficult time in their lives can be challenging but is also hugely rewarding. Many young lives have been turned around and given new inspiration by the support and dedication of their foster carers.

The responsibility of becoming a foster carer is not to be considered lightly, however some of the rewards* include:

- helping to keep children and young people safe
- helping children and young people to reach their full potential
- helping parents to develop new ways of relating to their children
- using your skills and life experiences for the benefit of others
- enhancing your own parenting skills and knowledge
- being a highly valued and contributing member of a caring team
- expanding your social and personal contacts.

Some of the challenges* include:

- if you have children, managing your own children's feelings about sharing you, their home and their lives
- responding to children's behaviours that you may not have previously experienced
- being able to say goodbye to children when they leave to return to their families
- feeling confident that children will be safe when they leave your care
- finding space in your life for yourself when so many demands will be made on your time and energy
- being able to persevere when the observable changes may be small or non-existent
- sharing the decision making for the children placed with you.

(*Source: The Department of Communities)

**Meet Steve
and Lisa ...**

“William and Bella came into our care when they were 3 and 5 years of age. It was a challenge caring for them in the beginning.



However, with the training, guidance and support of Care Pathways and the Department of Communities – Child Safety Services, we know we are not alone.

This support enables both of us to provide acceptance, consistent boundaries and love to William and Bella. As a result William is now attending kindy and Bella is at school and enjoying time with family and friends. Steve and I love spending time with them and our lives have been enriched since they became part of it.

Yes, we are foster carers.”



William and Bella

Commonly asked questions

What is the difference between fostering and adoption?

Unlike adoption, fostering is not about permanent care. Fostering gives a child a home for as long as they need while aiming to reunite the child with their family as soon as it is a safe and secure option.

Young couples, singles and students can foster even if they don't have children of their own.

How can I become a foster carer?

The process of becoming a trained and approved foster/kinship carer involves background screening which may include health, child protection, traffic, criminal history and domestic violence checks, as well as talking to personal referees. This is not intended to invade your privacy, but to ensure children and young people are placed in a safe, positive and stable environment.

We will work closely to match children and foster/kinship carers to find suitable placements that meet everyone's needs.

How long does it take?

It takes an average of 3-4 months to go through the assessment process. Care Pathways staff will keep you informed and updated on a regular basis.

Is there training involved?

Yes. We provide you with training and guidance both before you become a foster carer and during your time as a carer. Training is presented in a number of ways including home visits, online and face-to-face sessions. We also encourage support networks and contact between other foster/kinship carers so advice and support is always available.

What is the difference between fostering and adoption?

Unlike adoption, fostering is not about permanent care. Fostering gives a child a home for as long as they need it but the aim is to reunite the child with their family as soon as that is a safe and secure option. Sometimes because of individual family circumstances, children or young people may stay in care until they are 18 years of age.

Care Pathways' staff and the Department of Child Safety aim to maintain contact between the child and their family where possible and support the family to establish a suitable home environment.

In most circumstances, contact with the family is encouraged throughout the child's upbringing.

This helps the child and their parents stay connected, and makes it easier when they reunite.

Is there financial assistance available to carers?

Financial support is available and an additional allowance is paid for those who care for children and young people with high and complex needs. However, this only covers some of the costs of being a foster/kinship carer.

ABOUT CARE PATHWAYS

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Our services include foster care, residential care, semi-independent transition from care, assessment and intervention, training, and foster carer assessment.

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Churches of Christ Care

Churches of Christ Care is a division of Churches of Christ in Queensland and provides a range of care services to vulnerable persons at different stages of their life journey. Churches of Christ Care is a not-for-profit organisation active in the areas of early childhood services, child protection, social and affordable housing, retirement living, community aged care, and residential age care.



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