



Fostering for Permanency

Giving children and young
people a safe home for life

Contents

The pathway to becoming a permanent carer.....	4
A stable and nurturing environment.....	4
Making a difference.....	4
Things have changed.....	4
It takes all kinds of people.....	5
One step at a time.....	5
Guardianship from foster care.....	6
What is guardianship?.....	6
What is a guardianship order?.....	6
Who can become a guardian?.....	6
What support do guardians receive?.....	7
Can a guardianship order be changed?.....	7
Open adoption from foster care.....	8
What is open adoption?.....	8
Who can adopt?.....	9
What support do people who adopt receive?.....	9
Steps to becoming a permanent carer.....	10
How do I become an approved foster carer?.....	10
How do I become a guardian?.....	11
How do I foster to adopt?.....	11
Contact us.....	12





**Every child deserves
a safe home for life.
Will you be the one to
turn a child or young
person's life around?**

The pathway to becoming a permanent carer

A stable and nurturing environment

To be able to flourish and reach their full potential, children and young people need stability. They need to be loved and nurtured. They need to feel safe in a permanent home.

The priority is always to try to keep a child or young person with their parents, or return them to their family of origin. But sometimes, staying with their parents is not the best option for a child's wellbeing.

Making a difference

That's where you come in. When you care for a child or young person in need, you can completely turn their life around. While the child or young person is in your care, you will be responsible for their education and their physical and emotional wellbeing. This may also include supporting their connection to heritage and culture.



Nurturing a vulnerable child is not just life-changing for the child or young person, it can enrich your own life enormously.



The Children's Court in New South Wales decides when a child or young person will be placed in permanent care. Guardianship and open adoption are two types of permanent care.

Things have changed

The guiding principles for safely placing a child or young person in permanent care changed in New South Wales. Since October 2014, unnecessary administrative burdens have been removed. This has opened up more opportunities for permanent placement of children and young people in need.

In October 2017, the NSW Premier and the Minister for Family and Community Services announced major changes to the child protection system. The NSW Government's vision, Their Futures Matter: A New Approach, introduced immediate changes designed to give more children a permanent home where they can thrive.

For more information about the Their Futures Matter initiative go to:

www.theirfuturesmatter.nsw.gov.au

For more information about the Permanency Support Program go to:

www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/permanency-support-program

It takes all kinds of people

You might be surprised at how possible it is to become a permanent carer. Whether you're married or single, in a de facto or a same sex relationship, you can apply for guardianship or open adoption. It's not essential to have had previous experience as a foster carer or parent. But you do need to demonstrate your ability to provide care, and meet the support needs, of the child or young person in your care.

It can be challenging looking after a child or young person in need. Many guardians and adoptive parents talk about how worthwhile it feels to permanently care for a child or young person. Being able to provide stability and continuity as they nurture these children into adulthood is hugely rewarding for many guardians and foster parents.

One step at a time

It's perfectly normal to have concerns about making such a big commitment. You don't have to make a decision straight away. The first step is to read this e-book and discuss your wishes with your family.

Talk to others who have adopted or fostered children or young people living in out-of-home care or read their accounts on the **Challenge Community Services** website. Then call us and talk to one of our foster care team members.



Guardianship from foster care

What is guardianship?

When you become a child or young person's guardian you will be taking care of their emotional, social, cultural, and spiritual needs until they are 18 years old. You will also be responsible for looking after their health and education while at the same time supporting connections to their family. As a guardian, you will take on the parental rights and responsibilities for the welfare of the child, without the guidance of Department of Communities and Justice. Each year you will attend a review at Challenge.

What is a guardianship order?

If the Children's Court makes a guardianship order, the child or young person will live with their appointed guardian while still having contact with their parents, family and important people in their life, as long as it is safe to do so.



Guardianship is not like other forms of foster care. You will be independently providing a safe and stable environment for a young person or child until they become an adult.



Guardianship is different from other kinds of foster care because under a guardianship order you will be independently making decisions about the child's welfare. You will also be managing the contact between the child or young person and his or her parents without the involvement of a case worker or accredited foster care agency.

If the child or young person is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, or from a different cultural background to you, you will help maintain their connections with their culture and community through a cultural support plan that identifies their cultural needs.

Who can become a guardian?

A guardian is usually a relative, family friend or someone who has established a positive relationship with a child or young person. You may have established this relationship through an existing or previous fostering placement.



What support do guardians receive?

You can get help, support and advice from local services including child and family support, family counselling, health services, youth programs, and disability and child care services.

Guardians receive an allowance based on the individual needs of the child or young person which is in line with the Department of Communities and Justice. You may also be eligible for support from Centrelink.

For more information about allowances and support for guardians go to:
www.dcj.nsw.gov.au

Can a guardianship order be changed?

Yes. Sometimes circumstances change – either in the child or young person’s family of origin or your own. If you or the child’s parents believe it is in the child or young person’s best interest for the guardianship order to be changed, you can apply to the Children’s Court for the order to be changed.



NEED SOME HELP?
[Click here to contact us](#)

Open adoption from foster care

What is open adoption?

Open adoption is one permanent placement option for children or young people living in out-of-home care. When a child or young person cannot be restored to the care of their parents, and guardianship is not appropriate, open adoption may be in the best interests of the child or young person.

The difference between adoption and other kinds of permanent placement is that in adoption all legal rights and responsibilities of being a parent are transferred from the child's birth parents (or

anyone with parental responsibility for the child) to the adoptive parents.

Openness in adoption refers to the way a child is supported to remain connected to their birth family and cultural heritage. The Adoption Act 2000 recognises parents' interest in planning for their child's future, including decisions about having contact with their children and maintaining cultural identity. Where it is in their best interests, the child may retain links with their birth family and other significant people in their lives. This is what is meant by openness in adoption.





Who can adopt?

The main criteria for adopting is that you can provide a permanent, secure, stable and loving home. You also need to be healthy and able to deal with the challenges of open adoption. You don't need to have a lot of money, but you do need to be able to provide for the child or young person's health, social and education needs.

Single people, as well as couples (including same sex couples) over 21 are eligible to apply to adopt a child in New South Wales. The adoptive parent must be at least 18 years older than the child. We welcome adoptive parents from many different cultural backgrounds. Some applicants already have a family, others have never had children.

What support do people who adopt receive?

As an adoptive parent you can contact Department of Communities and Justice and Challenge Community Services for support. For example, we can help you make contact arrangements with the child's birth parents or refer you to specialist counsellors or support groups.

You will also be able to receive help, support and advice from local services including child and family support, family counselling, health services, youth programs, and disability and child care services.

You may be eligible for a means tested out-of-home care adoption allowance, a one-off Adoption Transition Support Payment and an annual Adoption Payment.

For more information about allowances and support go to www.dcj.nsw.gov.au



Challenge Community Services welcomes single people, married couples or people in de facto relationships (including same sex couples) from all cultural backgrounds.

Steps to becoming a permanent carer

Challenge Community Services has children and young people from 0 to 18 years who need permanent homes. If you are interested in guardianship or fostering to adopt, the first step is to talk to people close to you about your wishes. You are then ready to contact us.

If you are already an approved foster carer, contact your caseworker to initiate the adoption process. If you are not a current foster carer, we will take you through the assessment process for becoming an approved foster carer.



How do I become an approved foster carer?

Stage 1. Initial enquiry

Make an **online enquiry** or call us on **1800 084 954**.

Stage 2. Application

Complete the **application form** online.

Stage 3. Home visit

A Challenge team member will come to your home and help you complete remaining forms, such as a National Police Check. We will also look at the layout of your home to make sure it is safe and suitable.

Stage 4. Training

You will attend a 2 to 3 day training program to help you prepare for some of the challenges you may face as a foster carer.

Stage 5. Home interview

This is when we ask you about why you want to become a foster carer and whether you meet the requirements.

Stage 6. Approval

On approval of your application, we will work towards identifying a child or young person suitable to be placed in your care. You will be provided with ongoing training and support throughout your journey.

Once you are approved as a foster carer you can apply to become a guardian or adopt a child or young person in your care.

How do I become a guardian?

Where guardianship is the agreed permanency goal for a child or young person, Challenge will arrange for a guardianship assessment to take place. Once the assessment has been undertaken and it is deemed suitable to proceed to guardianship, information is submitted to the Children's Court. The Children's Court makes the final decision about a guardianship order for a child or young person. A child or young person 12 years of age or older must also give their consent before a guardianship order can be made.

How do I foster to adopt?

Where the permanency goal for a child or young person in your care is adoption, Challenge Community Services will help you lodge an application for an adoption with the Department of Communities and Justice.

You will attend mandatory training and be provided with on-going support from your caseworker to prepare you for the role of an adoptive parent as well as undergo an adoption assessment. Where a child or young person is over 12 years of age, they must also consent to the adoption for this to proceed.

Once the assessment is completed and it is deemed suitable to proceed, the Department of Communities and Justice will lodge an application with the NSW Supreme Court. The Supreme Court makes the final decision about the adoption for a child or young person. Where an adoption order is made, you will become the legal parents of the child or young person.

You will be able to access additional support from post-adoption and government services once an order has been made. You will also be required to follow the arrangements and guidelines as agreed to as part of the Adoption Plan.



Want to learn more?

To find out more about guardianship or fostering for permanency, contact Challenge Community Services on **1800 084 954** or enquire now at www.challengecommunity.org.au/foster-care



CHALLENGE
Community Services

Foster Care