

A new approach to recruit, develop and support guardians, adoptive parents and other carers

Under the Permanency Support Program, the NSW Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) is seeking a new agency or consortium (to be identified through an open tender process) to develop and implement a new, innovative approach to recruit, develop and support guardians, adoptive parents and other carers (namely, foster, kinship and relative carers).

What is the Permanency Support Program?

The Permanency Support Program is the name for changes that FACS is making to child protection and out-of-home care from 1 October 2017.

The main change is a shift from a 'placement-based' service system to a child- and family-centred service system that focuses on individual needs and helping families to change. This will give more children and young people safe homes for life, and minimise the number of children who remain in statutory care for long periods of time.

The changes have four main components:

- permanency and early intervention principles built into casework
- working intensively with birth parents and families to support change
- a new approach to the recruitment, development and support of guardians, adoptive parents and other carers
- Intensive Therapeutic Care system reform.

More information about the Permanency Support Program is available at www.facs.nsw.gov.au/psp

What is the new Carer Program?

A key component of the Permanency Support Program is a new approach to recruiting and supporting people who wish to become guardians, adoptive parents, or other carers (namely, foster, kinship and relative carers).

This strategy is focused on better understanding the roles that people wish to take on in order to support the children and families involved in the child protection system.

When it comes to emergency, restoration and respite carers, the focus will be on ensuring children and families are supported close to home and within their existing community wherever possible.

Where children cannot safely be restored home, the strategy will aim to recruit guardians and adoptive parents to give more children and young people a loving, permanent home for life.

We've listened to feedback that carers do not always feel adequately supported. As a result we'll be providing more support like setting a minimum amount for the carer allowance, and providing flexible training opportunities, better advocacy, and more opportunities to share their views and connect with each other.

To enable these changes, FACS is seeking a new non-government partner or partners (to be identified through an open tender process) to develop and implement

a new, innovative approach to the recruitment, development and support of guardians, adoptive parents and other carers.

The final design of the new program will be influenced by co-design with the sector, market research, and a survey of guardians, adoptive parents and other carers.

How will the new program impact existing carer recruitment, development and support?

Fostering NSW and Connecting Carers will continue to operate until the end of 2017. The work by Fostering NSW and Connecting Carers staff has been valuable and left a strong legacy to build upon. FACS is grateful for their contribution in carer support and recruitment campaigns which will continue to influence the new approach.

However, the Permanency Support Program presents an opportunity to take a new and integrated response to help the NSW public better understand the range of roles they can take on to support vulnerable children and their families in NSW, and ensure that they have a positive experience throughout their journey should they take on one of these roles.

The new program will provide an integrated approach to the recruitment, development and support of guardians, adoptive parents and other carers. It will also ensure that any transition between organisations currently providing people with support and advocacy is seamless. AbSec will continue to provide an important role in supporting Aboriginal carers.

Will out-of-home care (OOHC) service providers still recruit, develop and support carers?

The role of NGOs in recruiting, developing and supporting their carers will continue. The successful provider or consortium will work very closely with OOHC service providers to ensure that local approaches are cohesive and integrated.

We acknowledge that this new approach is just one of the many significant changes occurring for FACS funded services, and existing guardians, adoptive parents and other carers. We count on the support of our partners as we work to implement this much needed system change.

What does this mean for current foster, relative and kin carers?

We value the work of foster, kinship and relative carers, and think their role will be more important than ever to support each child and young person's pathway to permanency. With a stronger commitment to preservation and restoration, we expect to see less long-term carers over time.

Existing carers with any questions about their current care arrangements are encouraged to speak with their caseworker about their personal situation during the next home visit.

The voice of the dedicated people who currently support vulnerable children and families in NSW is important in designing the new program. Guardians, adoptive parents and other carers are invited to participate in the first ever NSW-wide survey so we can better understand experiences and ongoing support needs.

The survey can be accessed at www.caring.childstory.nsw.gov.au/support-for-carers/facs-carer-survey until 15 September 2017.

Responses will help to shape the future carer program and will be shared with carers through the online magazine Fostering Our Future which is available at www.community.nsw.gov.au/fostering-our-future

What are the details of the open tender process?

Tender FACS17.169 was published on the [NSW Government eTender website](#) on 8 August 2017.

Interested parties are invited to submit a Registration of Interest (ROI) by 28 August 2017. Successful applicants of the ROI will be expected to attend a design workshop in Sydney on 30 August 2017. The workshop will be an opportunity for candidates to contribute to the development of the new program.

It is anticipated that the successful tender will be announced in November 2017. FACS will work to ensure a streamlined transition to the launch of the new program in early 2018.

Where can more information be found?

FACS will provide updated information about these changes at www.caring.childstory.nsw.gov.au

Questions can be sent to carersprogram@facs.nsw.gov.au