



# FOSTER CARE

OPENING A DOOR TO CHILDREN IN NEED



*With more than 17,800 children and young people unable to live at home, we always need more carers. A timely reminder with Foster Care week (13th - 19th September), which aims to celebrate and acknowledge the work of foster carers.*



**P**athfinders programme, Pathways, have an established Out of Home Care programme in Armidale and Inverell, group homes, intensive and generalist foster care. We are currently seeking people interested in becoming foster carers in our communities.

### Have you ever thought about becoming a foster carer?

Foster carers play a vital role in giving these children safe and caring homes, helping to change their lives for the better.

Pathfinders are looking for passionate carers from a wide range of backgrounds. Carers must be at least 21 years old and can be single women or men, cohabiting, married or same-sex couples, with or without children. There is no prerequisite for being a carer, just a commitment to support and advocacy of children and young people in need of a caring environment.

Pathfinders Pathways Foster Care programme are seeking caring, committed people to become foster carers for our organisation in the New England area. We are seeking people for long term, temporary and respite care for children and young people aged 0 - 18 in the care of the Minister of Community Services.

### Why are children placed in foster care?

Children are placed in foster care when their families are not able to care for them.

This could be because of abuse, neglect, drug and alcohol problems, physical or mental illness, domestic violence, family breakdown or any other reason that means a parent is not able to care for their child.

### Who can be a foster carer?

Many different types of people make good foster carers. We need carers from a range of backgrounds in order to meet the needs of children requiring care. Foster carers must be at least 21 years old and can be single women or men, cohabiting, married or same-sex couples, with or without children.

### Can I be a foster carer if my children still live at home?

Yes. It can depend on the age of your children and the needs of the child you foster. Children who need care may have complex needs and require a great deal of time and attention. Fostering a child is a big change, so it is important to talk to our case-worker about your particular situation.

### Can I be a foster carer if I work?

Yes. It can depend on the needs of the foster child and the type of care you are providing. A carer with school aged children and adolescents can work full-time; preschool and younger children may need someone at

home.

### What types of foster care are there?

#### Temporary Care

Sometimes children come into temporary care due to parental illness, crisis or family breakdown. The goal is often to restore these children to their families over a period of time.

#### Permanent Care

Children in permanent care have been placed in care by the Court usually to age 18. These children/young people require stable long term placements to help them reach their full potential.

#### Intensive Support Care

Some children/young people who come into care require a high level of support due to a range of issues. These children can be challenging and require dedicated carers who have no young children of their own.

#### Respite Care

Caring for children can be challenging. Respite care allows full-time carers to have a break. This is a good way to experience fostering if you are not ready for a full-time commitment.

Young people aged eight and older are the most in need when it comes to stable foster

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families. Older children and sibling groups remain high priority for foster placement. There are a lot of carers willing to take the 0 - 4 age group, but once they get a bit older, there's the assumption that their behaviours are going to be too challenging, so they don't want to go there.

The young people have a case worker that works directly with all the child's needs and maintains the relationship between the child and their parents. Foster carers are also supported from the moment they begin training. It extends to constant support, ongoing training and a place to debrief.

### From a foster carer ...

“Changing a young person's life and opening your home to young people you don't know, there is real satisfaction in seeing them change when they are with you. Hopefully they can return to their own home, but in the meantime you have given them somewhere stable until they can. Sometimes this is not the case and it is really special that over a short space of time they become like family.” - Luke.

“Getting to know them all is very rewarding. It has its challenges, but they are great all the same. It's rewarding when you can make a difference. There is no better thing you can do than to help children. There is no better feeling than knowing you have made a difference in a child's life. Do it; it's awesome!” - Sharon.

To learn more about becoming a foster carer or respite carer, phone Pathfinders on 1800 314 199 or [www.pathfinders.ngo](http://www.pathfinders.ngo)