



Working in partnership with foster and kinship carers

Staff Learner Guide



Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

This artwork depicts **'The Journey'**. The Journey that DCP takes alongside its partners, alongside the children, parents, grandparents and caregivers. The meeting place in the middle is surrounded by children to show that they are the centre and light of everything, that they are what everyone is working so hard for and the meeting place is their destination and where the Journey lines meet.



Surrounded by the inner meeting place are smaller meeting places/waterholes representing the individual Journeys of the children, families and workers alike connected through more Journey lines. The smaller waterholes represent the many different places and areas the children are from.

Throughout this piece there are many Kangaroo and Emu footprints representing DCP in their Journey moving forward and never backward. The bottom of the piece has the symbol for rainbow which represents Hope. The Vibrant colours are used to represent each individual's story and that everyone's story matters and is always seen.





Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal people as the state's first people and Nations, and recognise Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the South Australian land and waters.

We recognise that Aboriginal children and young people have the right to grow up in a safe and nurturing environment where their connections to family, community, language, culture and country are supported, respected and celebrated.

DCP's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle artwork by Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara artist Elizabeth Close, in collaboration with Ochre Dawn Creative Industries.



Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

Purpose and learning outcomes

By the end of today's session, our aim is for you to develop an understanding of:

- governing legislation
- role and responsibilities in supporting foster and kinship carers
- Statement of Commitment
- rights of foster and kinship carers
- rights of children and young people in care
- information sharing and confidentiality
- the importance of your wellbeing



Child placement principles

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017:](#)

Part 3 (11) (1) on general placement principles

- all children and young people who have been removed from the care of a person under this Act should be placed in a safe, nurturing, stable and secure environment
- the preferred option in relation to such placement of a child or young person is to place the child or young person with a person with whom they have an existing relationship
- approved carers are entitled to be, and should be, involved in decision-making relating to children and young people in their care.



CALD child placement principles

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017:](#)

Part 3 (10) (1) (c) on Principles of Intervention

The *principles of intervention* are as follows:

(c) account should be taken of the culture, disability, language and religion of children or young people and, if relevant, those in whose care children and young people are placed

Part 3 (28) (2) (b) on Case Planning

Without limiting the matters that may be included in a case plan, each case plan must include such of the following parts as may be relevant to the prescribed child or young person's circumstances:

(b) a part setting out a cultural maintenance plan

Source: [Cultural and Linguistically Diverse requirements | Department for Child Protection](#)



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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

[Children and Young People \(Safety\) Act 2017:](#)

Part 3 (12) (2) on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

- (a) maintaining connection with family and culture
- (b) enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in the care and protection of their children and young people
- (c) for State authorities to act in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, families and communities in regards to the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as well as reducing the incidence of removal.

For further information, refer to SNAICC – National Voice of our Children:

[SNAICC - National Voice for our Children](#)



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Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

Five core elements and precursor



Identification: Ensuring that Aboriginal children are identified at the earliest possible point of child protection involvement – a precursor and prerequisite to the application of the Principle



Prevention: Aboriginal families are actively supported to access culturally responsive supports to mitigate the need for statutory intervention



Partnership: Aboriginal people, communities and organisations lead the delivery of child protection services and practice for Aboriginal children and families



Placement: Prioritising placement in care in accordance with the placement hierarchy



Participation: Ensuring the participation of Aboriginal children and families in child protection decision making



Connection: Maintaining and supporting connections to family, community, culture and country



DCP Practice Approach

The DCP Practice Approach provides practice guidance for DCP staff, including relevant guidance for working in partnership with foster and kinship carers.

- Practice Principle
 - [Supporting carers](#)
- Foundational theories and knowledge
 - [Aboriginal Child Placement Principle](#)
 - [Relationship based practice](#)
- Tools, processes and practice guidance
 - [Family Led Decision Making](#)
 - [Care team meetings](#)
- Practice Paper
 - [Supporting and collaborating with carers](#)



Role and responsibilities in supporting foster and kinship carers



Supporting foster and kinship carers – what does this mean for you?

- Ensuring the needs of children and young people are met beyond a safe and secure home.
- Collaborative effort as a care team – Family Group Conferencing and others.
- Ensuring the safety of children and young people as per the *Children and Young People's (Safety) Act 2017*.
- Abiding by the Child Placement Principle as stated by the Act.



Roles and responsibilities

Both in your individual role, and the function of your team, start thinking about and discuss the following in relation to supporting foster and kinship carers.

Discussion

- What informs our work?
- Who are we working with or for?
- What is expected of us?



Roles and responsibilities

Carer Assessment and Approval

- Start of application process
- Assessment of the carer's home and strengths
- Working with children check for everyone who lives with and has regular contact with the child or young people in care.

Carer Agreement

- Development of a Carer Agreement with the considerations for:
 - 2-yearly review
 - regular updates
 - inclusion of support required.

Carer Review

- The Act requires all approved carers are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that:
 - regular assessments are undertaken
 - relevant courses of training are made available
 - ongoing support and guidance is provided
 - proper assessments are made for financial or other assistance.



Statement of Commitment for foster and kinship carers

by DCP in partnership with Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers - SA Inc (CF&KC-SA)
and Child and Family Focus SA (CAFFSA)



Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

Statement of Commitment

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FOSTER AND KINSHIP CARERS

Children and young people have the right to receive safe, nurturing and competent care that recognises and respects their identity, and supports them to grow, develop and reach their full potential. Importantly, children and young people are at the centre of everything we do, and must be empowered to make decisions about their own lives. Without the dedication and commitment of foster and kinship carers*, this could not be possible. We respect carers as individuals beyond their caring role, and acknowledge the emotional impacts that caring may have on their own lives and families. We recognise the cultural strength and unique contribution that Aboriginal carers bring. By working together and supporting all carers in their vital role, we can provide children and young people with the care they need to look forward to a bright future.

This Statement of Commitment has been developed between Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA Inc, Child and Family Focus SA and the Department for Child Protection (DCP). It recognises that we must work in partnership and value carers as an essential and respected part of the care team for children and young people. Carers can expect to be:



INFORMED

We will provide clarity to carers around their role, responsibilities and entitlements.

We will ensure carers have the information they need about the children in their care.

We will be transparent about the legal rights of carers, how carers can report concerns and ask for decisions to be reviewed.



SUPPORTED

We will provide support, guidance and training to carers to meet the needs of children in their care.

We will provide carers with allowances, subsidies and reimbursements to enable a sustainable placement.

We will empower carers to make decisions for children to take part in everyday activities.



CONSULTED

We will involve carers in decisions about the children and young people in their care.

We will be open and honest when communicating with carers and honour agreements made with them.

We will provide carers with the opportunity to give feedback on policies and practices.



VALUED

We will acknowledge the skills, expertise and knowledge that carers bring to their role.

We will recognise carers as an integral part of the care team.

We will listen to carers and value their views and circumstances.

We will recognise and celebrate the contributions carers make.



RESPECTED

We will be culturally safe in the way we work with carers.

We will recognise the significant relationship that carers have with the children in their care.

We will respect carers as individuals beyond their caring role.

We will treat the personal information of carers in accordance with the Information Sharing Guidelines.

We commit to support carers by:

- Working together in partnership
- Communicating openly, honestly and respectfully
- Building and maintaining relationships based on mutual trust and respect
- Meeting legislated requirements of the child protection system.

Roles and responsibilities

Foster and kinship carers

- Providing safe care in a secure, nurturing family home environment
- Developing meaningful relationships with the children in their care and other members of the child's care team
- Maintaining the child's health and wellbeing, connection to culture and relationships with significant others
- Supporting the child to develop independent life skills and transition to adult life.

Department for Child Protection

- Approving carers
- Acting in the best interests of children and young people to maintain safety and wellbeing
- Involving carers in the child's care team
- Providing ongoing support and training to carers
- Understanding and responding to the needs of carers.

Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA

- Providing information and advice to foster and kinship carers
- Advocating for individual foster and kinship carers
- Connecting foster and kinship carers with each other for peer support
- Advocating on behalf of, and representing, carers and the carer sector with government and community stakeholders.

Child and Family Focus SA

- Representing the interests of children, young people and their families
- Advocating for the sector, including carer agencies, in prevention, early intervention and out of home care services
- Promoting effective partnerships and building sector capacity.

Foster care agencies and DCP Kinship Care Program

- Recruiting and retaining suitable foster carers
- Finding and supporting kinship carers
- Providing quality training, assessment and support to assist carers to provide safe and stable care
- Ensuring practices comply with relevant legislation, regulations and guidance.



Fiona Endacott
Fiona Endacott
Chief Executive Officer



Rob Martin
Rob Martin
Chief Executive Officer



Cathy Taylor
Cathy Taylor
Chief Executive



Hon Rachel Sanderson
Hon Rachel Sanderson MP
Minister for Child Protection



Government of South Australia
Department for Child Protection

*Both foster and kinship carers are defined as those currently approved by the Chief Executive under section 72 of the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017. Kinship care is provided by a relative, extended family member or kin. Foster care is provided by someone who has no previous relationship with a child or young person.

The [Statement of Commitment](#) articulates the roles and responsibilities of DCP and the sector in partnering with foster and kinship carers.

Understanding the Statement of Commitment



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxxDI7sbQKw>



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Principles of the Statement of Commitment

The principles outline what carers can expect from you and your agency as part of their role:

 INFORMED <p>We will provide clarity to carers around their role, responsibilities and entitlements.</p> <p>We will ensure carers have the information they need about the children in their care.</p> <p>We will be transparent about the legal rights of carers, how carers can report concerns and ask for decisions to be reviewed.</p>	 SUPPORTED <p>We will provide support, guidance and training to carers to meet the needs of children in their care.</p> <p>We will provide carers with allowances, subsidies and reimbursements to enable a sustainable placement.</p> <p>We will empower carers to make decisions for children to take part in everyday activities.</p>	 CONSULTED <p>We will involve carers in decisions about the children and young people in their care.</p> <p>We will be open and honest when communicating with carers and honour agreements made with them.</p> <p>We will provide carers with the opportunity to give feedback on policies and practices.</p>	 VALUED <p>We will acknowledge the skills, expertise and knowledge that carers bring to their role.</p> <p>We will recognise carers as an integral part of the care team.</p> <p>We will listen to carers and value their views and circumstances.</p> <p>We will recognise and celebrate the contributions carers make.</p>	 RESPECTED <p>We will be culturally safe in the way we work with carers.</p> <p>We will recognise the significant relationship that carers have with the children in their care.</p> <p>We will respect carers as individuals beyond their caring role.</p> <p>We will treat the personal information of carers in accordance with the Information Sharing Guidelines.</p>
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INFORMED

We will provide clarity to carers around their role, responsibilities and entitlements.

We will ensure carers have the information they need about the children in their care.

We will be transparent about the legal rights of carers, how carers can report concerns and ask for decisions to be reviewed.

- Keep carers in the loop and acknowledge any requests
- Talk to the carers first, or respond quickly when communicating a change to policy or procedure that directly impacts the carers or the child in care
- Provide the contact details of another staff member while on leave such as the supervisor or another worker
- Proactively provide options for feedback
- Use your preferred channel to communicate.





SUPPORTED

We will provide support, guidance and training to carers to meet the needs of children in their care.

We will provide carers with allowances, subsidies and reimbursements to enable a sustainable placement.

We will empower carers to make decisions for children to take part in everyday activities.

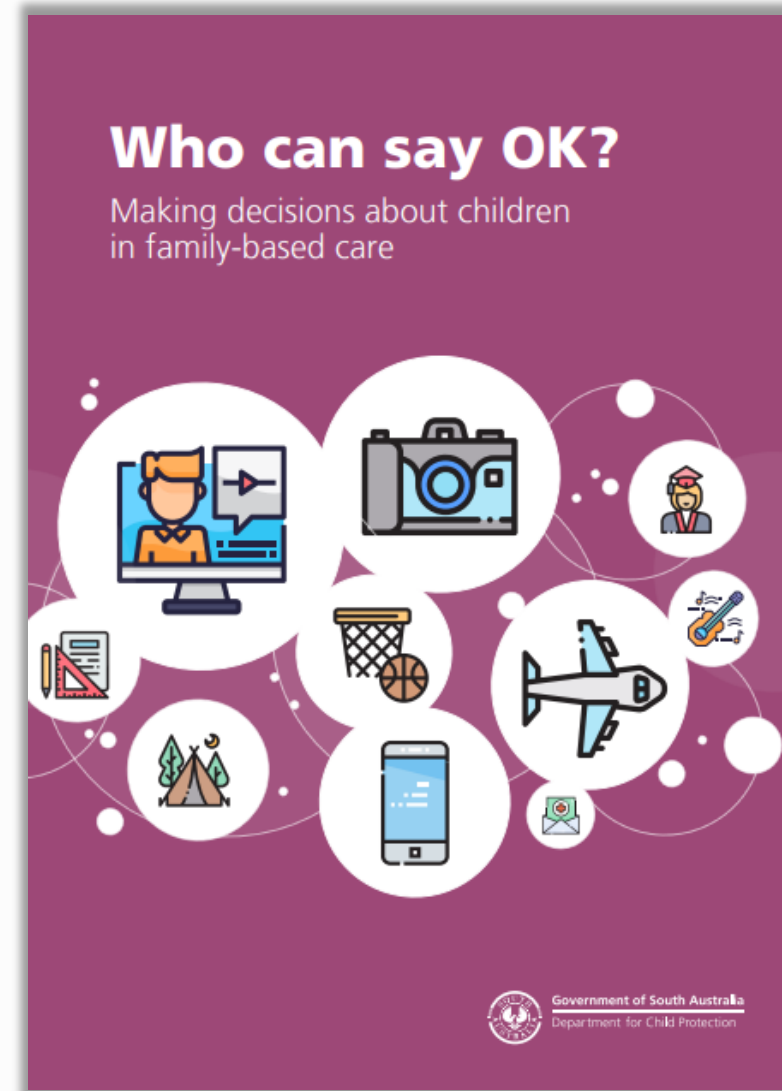
- Ensure that carers are supported to access entitlements
- Tailor frequency of visits based on your carers needs
- Empower carers to make day to day decisions as outlined in [Who can say OK](#)
- Follow up referrals and advocate for medical, therapeutic and allied health services for the child in a timely manner
- Support carers to connect with their DCP case worker to access DCP services to support carers where needed such as Psychological Services or the Therapeutic Support Care Team.



Who can say OK?

The Who can say OK booklet has detailed information about the roles and responsibilities of the carer and the DCP case worker.

<https://www.childprotection.sa.gov.au/careers/who-can-say-ok>





CONSULTED

We will involve carers in decisions about the children and young people in their care.

We will be open and honest when communicating with carers and honour agreements made with them.

We will provide carers with the opportunity to give feedback on policies and practices.

- Proactively ask for carers' views and opinions and listen to what they say
- Don't rush case planning and regularly discuss the case plan with carers not just at the annual review
- Provide genuine opportunities for carers to attend care team and other meetings
- Encourage active and ongoing participation in decision-making
- Give carers the critical information they need to enable genuine participation in decision-making
- Find ways to incorporate carers' views and wishes into decisions
- Engage in culturally sensitive practices.





VALUED

We will acknowledge the skills, expertise and knowledge that carers bring to their role.

We will recognise carers as an integral part of the care team.

We will listen to carers and value their views and circumstances.

We will recognise and celebrate the contributions carers make.

- Celebrate wins with carers, no matter how big or small
- Acknowledge carers' strengths often and don't wait for formal meetings or case plan reviews to raise this
- Genuinely consider carers' perspective when making decisions
- Acknowledge carers' valuable contribution.





RESPECTED

We will be culturally safe in the way we work with carers.

We will recognise the significant relationship that carers have with the children in their care.

We will respect carers as individuals beyond their caring role.

We will treat the personal information of carers in accordance with the Information Sharing Guidelines.

- Connect with carers on a personal level
- Genuinely acknowledge the importance of the relationship between carers and the child in care
- Clearly explain decisions and provide rationales
- Ask questions about carers' culture, demonstrate a genuine interest in learning and apply what you learn
- Acknowledge the carers' culture as a strength
- Undertake thorough handovers when there are staff changes
- Show understanding of carers' needs.



Supporting document

The [supporting document](#) provides practical guidance on how to use the Statement for carers and workers. It contains information on:

- what to expect of DCP and of agency or workers
- role as a carer
- reflective questions and other prompts to facilitate constructive conversations between carers and non-government organisation workers, or DCP case manager
- links to other relevant documents.

The screenshot shows a document page with a blue header containing the Government of South Australia logo and the Department for Child Protection. The main title is "Supporting document to the Statement of Commitment with South Australian Foster and Kinship Carers". Below the title, there is a paragraph stating that the Statement of Commitment recognises the family based care system must work in partnership and value carers. A callout box on the right states that the Statement of Commitment was launched in June 2020 by Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA Inc, Child and Family Focus SA and the Department for Child Protection. The "Purpose" section explains that the document provides guidance on how carers and workers can use the Statement of Commitment to understand their roles and responsibilities. The "Principles" section lists five key principles: informed, supported, consulted, valued, and respected, each represented by a colored button. Below this, a section titled "As a foster or kinship carer, your role is to..." lists ten bullet points detailing the carer's responsibilities. At the bottom, there is a footer with the URL "childprotection.sa.gov.au/soc" and the word "OFFICIAL" in red.

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Supporting document to the Statement of Commitment with South Australian Foster and Kinship Carers

The [Statement of Commitment](#) with South Australian Foster and Kinship Carers recognises that the family based care system must work in partnership and value carers as an essential and respected part of the care team for children and young people.

The Statement of Commitment was launched in June 2020 by Connecting Foster & Kinship Carers SA Inc, Child and Family Focus SA and the Department for Child Protection.

Purpose

This document provides guidance on how carers and workers can use the Statement of Commitment to understand their roles and responsibilities, and work together to support children and young people in care.

Principles

The Statement of Commitment is comprised of five key principles: **informed, supported, consulted, valued and respected.**

INFORMED SUPPORTED CONSULTED
VALUED RESPECTED

As a foster or kinship carer, your role is to...

- Provide safe care in a secure and nurturing family home environment
- Develop meaningful relationships with the children and young people in your care
- Maintain children and young people's health and wellbeing and relationships with significant others
- Support children and young people to remain connected to culture, extended family, kin, language and spiritual beliefs to maintain their sense of self, identity and emotional ties
- Assist children and young people to develop their Life Story work
- Support children and young people to participate in cultural activities so that their cultural identity is not lost
- Encourage children and young people to live fulfilling lives and reach their full potential
- Support children and young people's educational needs and education plans
- Assist children and young people to develop independent life skills and transition to adult life
- Support family contact and reunification plans (where applicable)

Visit childprotection.sa.gov.au/soc to view the Statement of Commitment

OFFICIAL

Last updated March 2021



Rights of foster and kinship carers



Rights of foster and kinship carers

- To be involved in decision-making processes about the child in care
- To be given certain information about the child in care to help provide the best care and keep them and the carers safe
- To have access to the right support including learning and development during their time as carers
- To have access to external advocacy and support from [Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA \(CFKC SA\)](#)
- To speak out if things aren't working and have issues resolved and explained to them.





Connecting Foster and Kinship Carers SA (CF&KC-SA)

- CF&KC-SA advocates for carers at an individual level, helping carers have an effective voice in matters that affect them and the children and young people in their care
- They also advocate at a systems level, influencing positive changes to attitudes, policies, systems and laws
- For more information, visit their website at <https://cfc-sa.org.au/>





Guardian
for Children and
Young People

Rights of children and young people in care

It is important to support carers to uphold the rights of children and young people in their care.

- The child or young person in care have the same rights as other children, but they also have a special **Charter of Rights**
- There is a whole learning and development program on advocating for the rights of the child or young people in care, but it's important to ensure carers know these core rights from the start of their caring role
- For more information, visit Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People website at: [OOGCYP \(SA\) – Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People](#)



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Department for Child Protection

Information sharing and confidentiality

Carers have the right to have certain information shared with them where there is a legitimate reason to do so under the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*.

This includes:

- Information about the child and young person prior to and while in their care to help them understand what is required to meet their needs
- Information about health and education plans and needs, background information and routines
- Contacts details of DCP case workers and other available support services for carers
- Discussions about the child and young people in care with workers and DCP
- Sharing certain information with others (such as a teacher or child care staff) within the guidelines about what information can be shared and when.



Supporting carers - when things don't go to plan

- When there is a reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed or is likely to suffer harm due to standards of care not being met, a care concern can be raised.
- DCP's Care Concerns Management Unit (CCMU) is responsible for managing care concerns and determining outcomes. They work closely with regional offices and other areas of DCP to respond to care concerns.
- Going through a care concern process is extremely stressful and distressing and it requires commitment to manage these processes promptly and support the carers during the process.
- Carers may make a complaint and have their rights to be heard and considered.



Taking care of your wellbeing



This is rewarding and challenging work....

Working in child protection is a complex job, regardless of what area you work in.

The stories we hear and the things we experience can be distressing, scary and emotionally draining. But they can also be rewarding, amazing and full of hope.

The important thing is to make sure you take care of you – none of us can do our job well if we are unwell.



Toolkit for self-care

- Peer-support (build your network)
- Supervisors and Managers
- Work life balance
- Ask for what you need
- Formal support
- Incident debriefing
- Work, Health and Safety



Any questions?

Thank you for your time today

