



How Your Church can Care for Carers. A Practical Guide.

There are so many ways to provide practical support for carers.

Kids in care need a lot of focused time with their carers. Sometimes seemingly simple things can go a long way to help carry the load for carers who are giving their lives to providing nurturing, healing, care for children, which is not without unknowns, risks and a significant investment of time, energy, and emotion.

1. BE CREATIVE:

Support can come in all different forms.

What will free up time and energy to allow carers to focus on caring?
Meals, ironing, cleaning, gardening, help with DIY or running errands.

We've provided a list of ideas on the next page to help spark ideas.

Note:

Kinship Carers and Permanent Carers or Guardians, are more likely to receive less formal support from agencies than Foster Carers. Many do not necessarily identify as "Carers" and may not want to be identified in this way but are still likely to be under a lot of pressure in their role. It is worth exploring any support they might be willing to accept.



Practical Support Ideas.

- ▶ When a new placement is received: start a meal train, give a gift hamper.

- ▶ Delivering meals / food delivery voucher (check any dietary requirements or preferences).

Find out the family's busiest day of the week and make or order a meal for that day.

- ▶ Doing groceries or running errands.

Ask for a grocery list or pick up their online grocery order. If you're out running errands, check in and see if they need anything.

- ▶ Home help on a regular basis (washing, ironing, meal prep, housework)

- ▶ Fortnightly tidy-up of the garden and yard.

- ▶ Providing practical items needed prior to a first placement and ongoing.

What type of placement(s) will they be receiving - age, gender, etc.?

What items might be helpful? e.g. nappies, spare clothes, pram, toys, books, skateboard, PlayStation, spare laptop, etc.

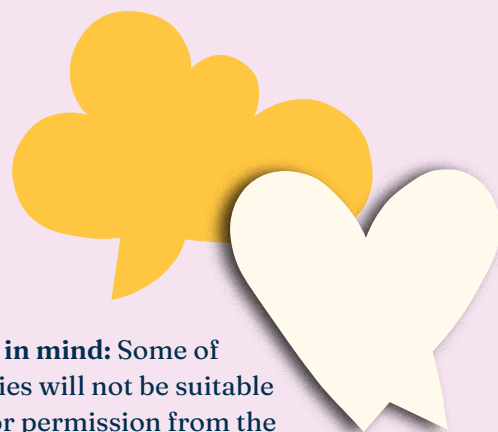
- ▶ Help with school or day care drop off /pick up.

- ▶ Provide an extra pair of hands to help with morning or evening routines.

Find out the busiest time of day and offer to help with the other kids while the carer works intentionally with the child in care to establish connection and new rhythms.

- ▶ Offer to play with the kids for an hour or two while the carer takes care of their to-do list or puts their feet up.

- ▶ Send mum and dad out on a date night.



Please keep in mind: Some of these activities will not be suitable without prior permission from the Case Manager, or if not permitted according to your Child Safety Policy.



2. BE SPECIFIC:

Every family is unique. The type of support that is useful will depend on the carer, the children in their care, other available support, personality, capacity, and schedule. Don't assume that what is helpful for one family will be helpful for another.

Find out what the carer and family need and prefer. Do they prefer texting or calling? Would they prefer to go out on a date night, or some help around the house?

“What do you need?” can be a hard question to answer.

Try proposing some ideas to get a sense of what might suit them.

3. BE PERSISTENT & CONSISTENT:

Foster Carers are often resilient, high-capacity people who may be reluctant to ask for support.

Ask. Then ask again. The trick can sometimes be in carers accepting support but be persistent, while remaining sensitive and never intrusive.

Commit to the journey. Carers often won't know how long a child will be in their care but you can show up for them for however long it is. Ensure you can meet any commitments you make and communicate clearly if you can't.

4. BE FLEXIBLE & UNDERSTANDING:

Be prepared for some of the unknowns that come with Foster Care; things will change.

Some information won't be able to be shared with you. We don't need all the details to be able to provide support.

5. BE SAFE:

Be aware and respectful of boundaries regarding the involvement of other adults with children in Foster Care. Refer to the Guidelines below.

If support activities are organised by the Church and carried out by staff or volunteers, rather than in the context of a personal friendship, always ensure you comply with your Child Safety Policy, which typically will require screening to work with children and will not permit one-on-one contact with a child.

Always respect privacy and confidentiality. Don't use names or images of children or young people in care in a public forum (including social media).





Foster Care Support Guidelines.

These are general guidelines that apply for Foster care placements (standards may differ across agencies and states/territories and will be different for other types of care). If in doubt, defer to the Carer who is responsible to check with their Case manager as required.

Always consider where your Child safety Policy does not permit certain activities with children for staff or volunteers.

Activities that don't involve direct contact with children in care and where the carer is present are Safe

Examples: Delivering meals or gifts, running errands, housework or gardening, providing practical items.

Activities that do involve direct contact with children in care require Permission/Approval

These activities are likely to be ok but the Case Manager should be made aware in advance to confirm if any checks are required (e.g. a police check).

Examples: Home help with children present, supervision of children while the carer is present, brief periods of supervision of children outside of the carer's home or in public places, one-off babysitting.

Activities with a child unsupervised, overnight, or on a recurring basis require Permission + Additional Checks

This level of support requires additional screening by the agency including, for example, a police check and home and environment check.

Examples: Babysitting outside of the carer's home, for an extended period of time, overnight, or on a recurring basis.



A note on Respite Foster Care

E.g. overnight care provided one weekend a month. Typically this will involve the same training and assessment process as other types of Foster care. If someone is in a position to commit to Respite Care as their friend steps into full time Foster Care, they should discuss the possibilities with the agency!

Carers might be interested in the Homeward Project *Wrap-Around Teams* material to help them build a self-selected holistic support system.

Find this and other resources at homewardproject.org

