

A warm welcome

from Life Without Barriers



LIFE WITHOUT BARRIERS



A warm welcome

**Welcome to Life Without Barriers.
You're about to begin an amazing journey!**

We're thrilled to have you join our team of incredibly passionate people; staff, foster and kinship carers, and health specialists who, like you, are motivated by a desire to make a real and lasting positive difference in a child's life.

The ability to care for a child is a gift. On behalf of the thousands of children in Australia who are unable to live safely with their family at this time, we thank you.

*"The best gifts we as carers
can give a child or young
person is our love, time and
attention"*



In this booklet

You'll find information about:

1. How we support children in care and how your role fits in with this.
2. How we support you throughout your journey, so you feel confident and equipped to tackle situations as they arise.
3. How to prepare for your first placement – it's an exciting time but it can also be nerve-racking, so we're here to help.





Our approach

Children and young people are at the heart of everything we do, and we only work in ways that evidence tells us makes a difference for them.

To support the best possible outcomes for all children in out of home care, we have adopted an evidence based, trauma informed model called CARE.

We use the CARE model to guide our work with children and their families, and to equip carers with the skills needed to care for and nurture a foster child.

The CARE model influences the way we think about children. It focuses on our relationships to help children build new skills and guides how we work with children and their families.



CARE

The six CARE principles provide the foundation for all our interactions with children:

- ✓ Relationship based
- ✓ Ecologically oriented
- ✓ Developmentally focussed
- ✓ Family involved
- ✓ Trauma informed
- ✓ Competence centred

*"Caring for the children
gives me a real sense of
purpose and
enjoyment in my life"*





How we support you

“I have always felt supported, Life Without Barriers is always there with help, training, advice and practical support when I need it.”

Our Carer Guide

Our digital [Carer Guide](#) is available on our website, which has a wealth of information to support you in your role. We recommend keeping it as a ‘favourite’ in your web browser for your reference and easy access.

We update it from time to time, as we develop new materials, so we recommend you check in to keep your knowledge up to date.



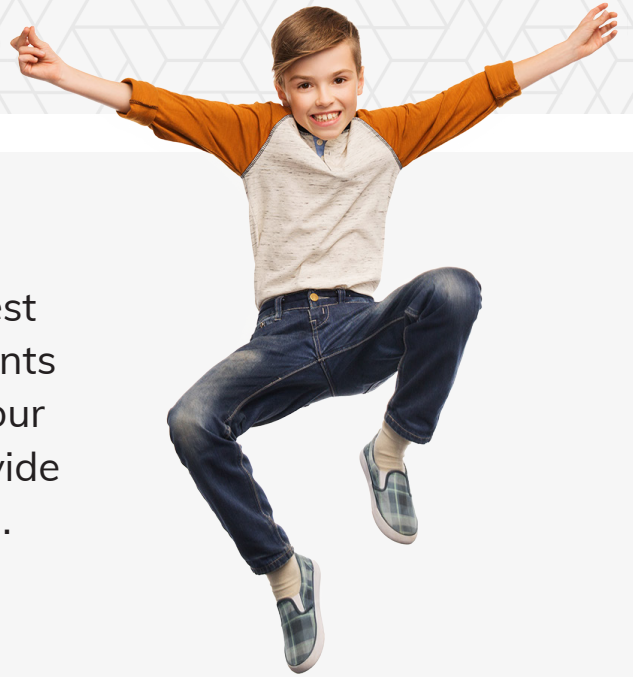
Training and induction

Knowledge is powerful, so we provide plenty of learning opportunities to help you feel confident in your new role as a carer.

As part of your induction, you'll receive formal training in:

- ✓ Introduction to Out of Home Care
- ✓ Trauma related behaviour
- ✓ We Put Children First, and
- ✓ Disability Awareness for Out of Home Care
- ✓ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture and much more!

You'll also receive refresher and ongoing formal and informal training, suited to your level of experience and the needs of children in your care.



Carer networking

Talking to other carers is sometimes the best form of support. Through regular carer events we create opportunities for you to share your experiences, celebrate successes, and provide feedback to the Life Without Barriers team.

Ask us how we can connect you to a carer support group in your local area so you can get tips and advice from other experienced foster carers.

*“Spend as much time as possible
with other foster carers,
ask lots of questions,
inform yourself and be patient.”*

Teamwork

We're big on teamwork and you're considered an integral part of what will become your Care Team. Other members of your Care Team include a Case Manager, Clinicians, and respective family members.

You'll receive one-on-one support and supervision from the specialist within your Care Team.

Supervision is designed as an opportunity for you to openly ask questions and honestly talk about any concerns you may have. It's also an opportunity for us to continue building our relationship together.

Allowances

As a foster carer you'll receive a tax-free allowance, which aims to help with the essentials like:

- ✓ food
- ✓ health care
- ✓ activities
- ✓ transport, and
schooling

Please note, allowances do vary depending on:

- ✓ which State or Territory you live in
- ✓ the needs level of the child
- ✓ the number of children in the family group

Payments are made fortnightly direct into your bank account by either LWB or the relevant Government Department (depends on location).

Where extra expenses occur beyond the ordinary costs of care, additional financial support may be available. You will need to discuss this with the child's case manager before incurring these costs. Some expenses need to be approved as part of the child's case plan.

24/7 on-call crisis support

You'll have access to on-call crisis support at any time of the day or night for advice, support and direction in stressful situations.

Respite

For a night or a weekend, children in care may spend time with a respite carer, an opportunity to strengthen social and family networks while their carer takes a short break. This type of care is only offered when it is in the child's best interest.

Employee Assistance Scheme (EAP)

The EAP is a counselling service to assist with personal or life issues that may arise from time to time. Services are provided independently of Life Without Barriers, in complete confidence and at no cost.





Feedback

As someone who directly supports children and young people, we understand the importance of hearing your voice throughout this experience.

If you would like to give us some positive feedback about our service or staff, please send your words of encouragement to lwbcarers@lwb.org.au

If you have questions or concerns, please contact your local team. If you would like to lodge a formal complaint, you can fill in the our Online Form located on our website or email us at lwbcarers@lwb.org.au





Preparing for placement

You've just been offered your first placement – it's an exciting time but we know it can be nerve-racking too. Our goal is to help you be as prepared as possible and settle those nerves.

Matching a child with you

Each child and their family have their own needs. So, it is vital we carefully match them with carers who can meet their needs. During the assessment process, you would have discussed your skills and experiences. This helps you and us decide the type of care, age and number of children you are most suited for. It is ok for you to have ongoing discussions with the care team about the children and young people that may be placed with you. You know your strengths and abilities and we invite you to have a say about children placed in your care.

Remember, if you're asked about taking care of a child and feel you're not able to meet their needs it is OK to say no.

“If you can give one of these children a better life...go for it - you’ll become more empathetic”

Preparing your home

When a child is placed in care they experience a big transition in their life. They will likely feel very nervous and potentially frightened. You can help children feel more comfortable and secure by taking steps to make your home feel welcoming.

A great place to start is by completing an ‘Our Family’ introduction profile, which is provided to children (where possible) prior to arriving to your home. This is a creative, trauma-informed way to help children and young people get to know you a little better prior to meeting you for the first time. You should receive templates as part of your induction, or you can ask your local team member for a copy.

Depending on their situation, children don’t always have a lot of belongings with them. We recommended you keep a supply of essentials



available for them to use when they arrive, like a toothbrush, some toiletries, and a few clothing items (in varying sizes and genders).

A welcome basket of goodies packed with a cosy blanket, some age-appropriate toys, books and other fun items are ways to make them feel at home, cared for and is a great conversation kick-starter.

It can take time for children to fully settle into a new space and with new people. Be patient and kind and talk to your care team if you have any concerns.

Preparing your family

While your family is no doubt excited about a child's arrival, please remind them the child may not feel the same. They may feel scared, angry, or overwhelmed.

Consider discussing with your family how they can make the child feel more at home. They might take them on a tour of the house and show them to their new room. Explain how your family functions such as; is there a schedule for the week? Do you have any general guidelines like curfews, or how much time they can spend on technology? Be aware that the children may be coming from a home with a different set of values or rules and that you may need to look for ways to accommodate different experiences.



A checklist for first-time carers

Do remind your family that although the child needs to feel welcomed, they also might need to have some personal space until they adjust to their new home and environment.

Here are a few questions to ask and things to have on-hand before your upcoming placement.

Questions to ask your Care team:

- How old is the child / children?
- Has the child been in care before?
- How long is the placement expected to last (l.e. a few days, a few weeks, months or more)
- What arrangements are in place for the child to see their family? What is needed of me?
- Does the child have any medical needs? e.g.: allergies, or medication
- Does the child have any appointments already scheduled? E.g. physiotherapy, dentist, paediatrician appointment

- Does the child attend school? Which school? How do they usually get to and from school?
- Do you know if they have any belongings?
- Does the child have any existing extra-curricular activities such as sport, music lessons, tutoring? Do we know the likes / dislikes of the child for example favourite meals, sports they love, activities?

Creating creature comforts:

- Provide age-specific, clothing, books, pencils and toys
- Ensure a clean room and bedding is available
- Focus on the child's immediate needs
- Reassure the child by telling them you are here to help and you're nearby if they need anything
- If you have your own children, explain to them that the child may need space and to politely introduce themselves.



You've got this!

We'll be right beside you every step of the way with advice, guidance and training, where and when you need it.

We'll surround you in a network of support so you can do the best you possibly can.

Your Care Team is only a call away.

"I found it reassuring knowing I wasn't alone; that help was only a phone call or email away."



lwbcarers@lwb.org.au