

# Understanding if you're ready

Foster care readiness conversation

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**“Everyone’s path is unique. It was important to take the time to assess and explore our motivations and expectations and feel as sure as possible that we were ready to give our all to this process.”**

Chris - foster carer

After talking with our team of specialists about what it is to be a foster carer, and discussing a few quick points of eligibility, the next step is engaging in a longer conversation where we learn a little more about you and explore how fostering might work for your family – either now or in the future. We’ll share some additional pointers along the way to help you understand what children in care need to thrive, and to ensure your journey as a carer is a successful one.

## What is the readiness conversation?

The readiness conversation is an in-depth phone interview (lasting approximately 45–60 minutes) that helps both you and Life Without Barriers explore your readiness and suitability to become a foster carer. It’s a two-way conversation designed to:

- Help you reflect on your motivations and capacity to foster.
- Provide you with detailed information about fostering with Life Without Barriers.
- Determine the next steps in the application process.

During the conversation, we will share information about Life Without Barriers and fostering, whilst asking you to share openly about your life and things we know are essential in determining the right time to start your journey.

## What will be discussed?

During the conversation, we’ll discuss several key areas that will help you understand how your life might align with the responsibilities and commitments of fostering. These are explored in more detail below.

## About you and your household

We'll ask you to share some details about you and your household, information that will help you move through the application process, if you choose to proceed. These details will assist with the background check process, matching of children and carers, and understanding how the dynamics of your household would suit fostering. The information will be stored securely at all times. Some of the things we will ask you to share with us are:

- Personal details (name, contact info, relationship status).
- Cultural identity and background.
- Living arrangements and household members.
- Health, well-being, and lifestyle details.
- Important information about background checks.

## Your home environment

Having a safe and nurturing environment is key to fostering, including making sure there is adequate space for a child to feel comfortable within your home. Life Without Barriers is responsible for ensuring the environments in which children and young people live are safe, hygienic, and stable. Discussing your current and future plans for your home will help us understand how well-prepared you are to welcome a child into your home. We'll ask about:

- The type of residence you live in and what space is available for a child.

- Safety features of your home (e.g., pools, pets, firearms).
- Any future plans for moving or renovations.

## Family and social dynamics

Becoming a caring household, by welcoming a new member, often means changes to the dynamics of your home, along with shifts in your social life and the time you have available to offer to friends, family, and the community. We'll ask you to consider what you currently have on your plate and how you might manage any changes to your dynamics. These could include:

- Any children in the home or shared care arrangements.
- Who is your support network (family, friends, community).
- What the impact of fostering might be on your family and social life.

## Employment and availability

We understand that in today's economic landscape, working full-time is often a necessity for all adults in a household. This can leave little time for other endeavours, including fostering. Hence, it's essential to discuss what time and availability you have free to meet the needs of children, and what types of fostering might be best suited to your current commitments. Some people may consider changing their employment to allow for fostering, where flexible work arrangements and remote work can offer the opportunity to respond to the changing needs of children at short notice.

We'll explore things like:

- Your current work schedule and flexibility.
- Your ability to attend appointments and training.
- Your availability to transport children to school, necessary appointments, visits with family and other connections.

### **Motivation and experience**

While it is not necessary to have had your own children, having some experience in meeting the basic needs of children or caring for them in some capacity can be highly beneficial. Through the assessment process, our team will discuss your knowledge of child development and the needs of children, and seek evidence on how you have or would meet those needs. Understanding the reasons behind your desire to become a foster carer can help both you and our team decide if now is the right time for you to take the next step. We'll ask you about:

- Why do you want to foster, and your exposure to fostering to date.
- What experience you have with children or in caring roles.
- Your openness to learn and grow as a carer.

### **Values and beliefs**

Carers come from all kinds of backgrounds, with different belief systems, experiences and lifestyles. Whilst we value diversity, we do believe some fundamental values and attributes are inherent in excellent carers.

We also think that it's essential for your values to align with our organisational values and therapeutic approach to fostering. With that in mind, we'll ask you to share:

- Your views on discipline, trauma, and child development.
- How open you are to caring for children from diverse backgrounds and supporting a child's identity unconditionally.
- Whether you are committed to working with children's families and care teams in an open and genuine manner.

## **What is Life Without Barriers looking for?**

There is no one perfect carer or mould that all excellent carers come in. Just as all children are unique, so too are the ideal environments in which they can heal and thrive. There are some key principles that we believe in, which help us ensure we are providing opportunities for positive change. Life Without Barriers utilises the CARE model to inform its therapeutic approach, as well as its assessment of potential carers. This includes considering key principles of:

- **Relationship-based:** Ability to form nurturing, stable relationships.
- **Developmentally focused:** Supporting children's growth at their own pace.
- **Family inclusive:** Supporting children's connections with their families.

- **Trauma informed:** Understanding and responding to pain-based behaviours.
- **Ecologically oriented:** Creating a safe, connected home and community environment.

Life Without Barriers also believes excellent carers embody the attributes of:

- Warmth and patience.
- Altruism and emotional intelligence.
- Flexibility and resilience.
- Openness to learning and feedback.

## What happens after the interview?

Based on the conversation, you may be:

- Referred to the local Life Without Barriers team for a home visit and next steps towards becoming a foster carer.
- Invited to stay in touch through learning opportunities or events until you are ready to become a foster carer.
- Provided with feedback if fostering is not the right fit at this time.

## Tips for a great conversation

We hope to facilitate an excellent experience for all potential carer applicants and will ensure that we are present, open, and warm while answering your questions and learning about you. We will always approach the interview in a non-judgmental manner and treat your story with respect.

There are some things you can do to ensure the experience is a great one, including:

- Set aside uninterrupted time (about an hour).
- Be honest and open—this helps ensure the best outcomes for children.
- Feel free to ask questions—this is your opportunity to learn too.
- Reflect openly on your family's readiness and support network.

## Are you ready?

If you think you're ready to take the plunge and book a readiness conversation with us, get in touch!

**Phone: 1300 592 227**

**Email: [carers@lwb.org.au](mailto:carers@lwb.org.au)**

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