



LUTHERAN
CARE

Specialist Care Information Booklet



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foster care



Hello!

Thankyou for enquiring about becoming a Specialist Foster Carer with Lutheran Care (LC). Specialist Foster Care equips and supports individuals, couples and families caring for children and young people with high care needs.

Foster Care is a journey, and our team is here to walk alongside you every step of the way.



About Specialist Foster Care



Specialist Carer Support



Frequently Asked Questions

**IT TAKES
A VILLAGE
TO RAISE
A CHILD**

What is Specialist Foster Care?

Some children and young people require an ongoing high level of care to meet their day-to-day needs related to developmental trauma, disability, complex medical or developmental needs, and challenging behaviours. These children and young people require therapeutic care from individuals or couples who have the skillset and time availability to meet their complex needs.

The Department for Child Protection (DCP) assesses children and young people's eligibility for a Specialist Care placement. At a minimum, children and young people require a Complexity Assessment Tool (CAT) score of 3: "moderate problems" or above for referral to Specialist Care.



Who can be a Specialist Foster Carer?

It takes someone patient, flexible, skilled and empathetic to embrace a child through unconditional connection and help them navigate their journey to healing and thriving. We will explore the eligibility criteria with you to form a strengths-based assessment of your competencies and support needs.

Who can be a Specialist Foster Carer?

Specialist Foster Carers need to meet general foster carer approval criteria in addition to:

- Completing advanced therapeutic care training: Three Pillars of Transforming Care or Therapeutic Crisis Intervention Families (TCIF) training prior to approval and completed both within the first year of approval
- Having a current Provide First Aid certificate HLTAID011
- Having a current driver's license, roadworthy vehicle and a willingness to drive
- Having adequate space and resources in the home to meet a child's complex needs (a child in Specialist Care will require their own bedroom)
- Possessing skills and abilities in advocacy.
- Having an understanding of developmental trauma and the needs underlying a child's behaviour
- Being experienced in caring for children with complex needs
- Having knowledge and skills in therapeutic parenting and de-escalating children in crisis
- Self-awareness and self-regulation of own emotions and triggers
- Having a stable home environment, which supports physical and mental health
- A willingness to attend therapies and health/medical appointments with the child
- A commitment to ongoing learning and development, including attending regular trainings
- A commitment to engaging in fortnightly carer support home visits.



What do we offer?

At Lutheran Care, we believe that taking care of our foster families is crucial for the wellbeing of children in their care. When we feel valued and supported, we are empowered to show up as our best selves for those we care for.

In all that we do, we aim to listen to our Foster Carers' knowledge and expertise, walk alongside you and help you to grow in the face of challenges.

Our Specialist Carer support includes:

- Listening to and advocating for your needs and views

- Fortnightly home visits, focused on you and your family unit's needs
- Attending DCP, Education, NDIS and other child-related meetings with you
- Access to advanced carer trainings specific to your family's needs this includes ASD, ADHD, FASD, sensory processing, Key Word Sign, epilepsy, medication administration and self-care trainings.
- LBI Foundation's IMPACT Program v trainings, online workshops and resources

- Working with you to identify how your child's needs will be met if you are wanting to continue or return to the workforce.
- Specialist Care children's events where you can connect with other Specialist Care families and enjoy child-friendly activities in a non-judgemental, safe and supportive environment
- Carer connect events: share a cuppa and a chat with other Specialist Care families who "get it"
- Inclusion support for broader carer community events
- Intensive support and consultation from Lutheran Care's Therapeutic Practitioner and Therapeutic Support Lead
- Cultural connection support from Lutheran Care's Aboriginal Cultural and Multicultural Workers



- Priority referral to in-house NDIS Positive Behaviour Support with the Elcies Disability Care Team
- Specialist Care Resource Library, including adult and children's books, audiobooks and sensory tools
- Diverse staff team with training and experience in the interrelated impacts of trauma, disability, high medical needs and developmental challenges on child behaviour and caregiver wellbeing.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the differences in carer payments?

Specialist Carer payments are provided at a significantly higher rate than Generalist Care, and are based on the current average Australian Wage.

This is in recognition of the extra day-to-day expenses incurred and the reduced ability to participate in the workforce around a child's high care needs.

Payments are provided fortnightly by DCP at a flat rate, regardless of the age of the child (up to 18).

Special Needs Loadings, Education and Activity Grants do not apply to children in Specialist Care.

DCP's "Who Pays for What" and Carer Payment Handbook guides still apply to Specialist Carer Payments.

Carer payments remain tax free, and non-declarable income.

Carer payments increase annually at the change of financial year in line with the CPI index.

Carer payments commence once both the carer and child are approved as Specialist. Once carers are approved, carer payments will be backdated to when the child was approved if approved first.

For more information on Specialist carer payment rates, please ask one of our Specialist Care Team Leaders.

What's the difference between specialist carer approval and a specialist placement?

DCP will be responsible for assessment and approval or a special placement for the child in a separate process from Lutheran Care seeking to add Specialist Care to your approval.

Do the children need to be present for LC visits?

Ideally we will have a balance between visits when the children are and are not home. This is so we can discuss your wellbeing and sensitive topics away from little ears, as well as see first-hand what life looks like for your family to best understand your needs.

What do fortnightly home visits look like?

We tailor home visits to you and your family unit. To get the best out of your home visits, we encourage you to regularly discuss your support needs and preferences with us. Home visits can include support around:

- Therapeutic parenting strategies
- Child-specific developmental, medical and/or disability-related needs
- Understanding developmental trauma
- Responding to challenging behaviours
- Developing Therapeutic Crisis Management and Behaviour Support Plans
- Completing Life Story Work

- Navigating DCP, NDIS and Education systems
- Preventing carer fatigue
- Self-care and wellbeing
- Your learning and development needs
- Specialist training
- Your respite support needs
- Carer approval and reviews
- Effective communication and advocacy

Fortnightly home visits are the foundation for providing you and your family with consistent and predictable support through the ups and downs of fostering. If a home visit needs to be rescheduled, we will aim to arrange a makeup visit within the same fortnight and then keep to your regular schedule.

Am I allowed to work?

At Lutheran Care (LC) we respect our foster parents' desires to remain engaged in employment, in balance with meeting a child's complex care needs. We know from the carer community how important participating in the workforce can be for long term emotional and financial wellbeing. We do not require a child's primary caregiver to leave the workforce

and support families to share work and caring commitments between caregivers and support people if they wish to do so. For example, two caregivers may both work part time so that one person is available for the child when the other is at work, or single caregivers may work part time and arrange for their household support people to provide care for the child during their working hours.

Can I apply for Long Term Guardianship in future if I no longer need Specialist support?

Specialist Care typically continues for the length of the child's placement even if their needs settle over time. This is to maintain success through ongoing therapeutic care and be prepared for the likelihood of the child needing high levels of support at future developmental stages, such as during adolescence and transitioning to adulthood. It is possible to apply for Long Term

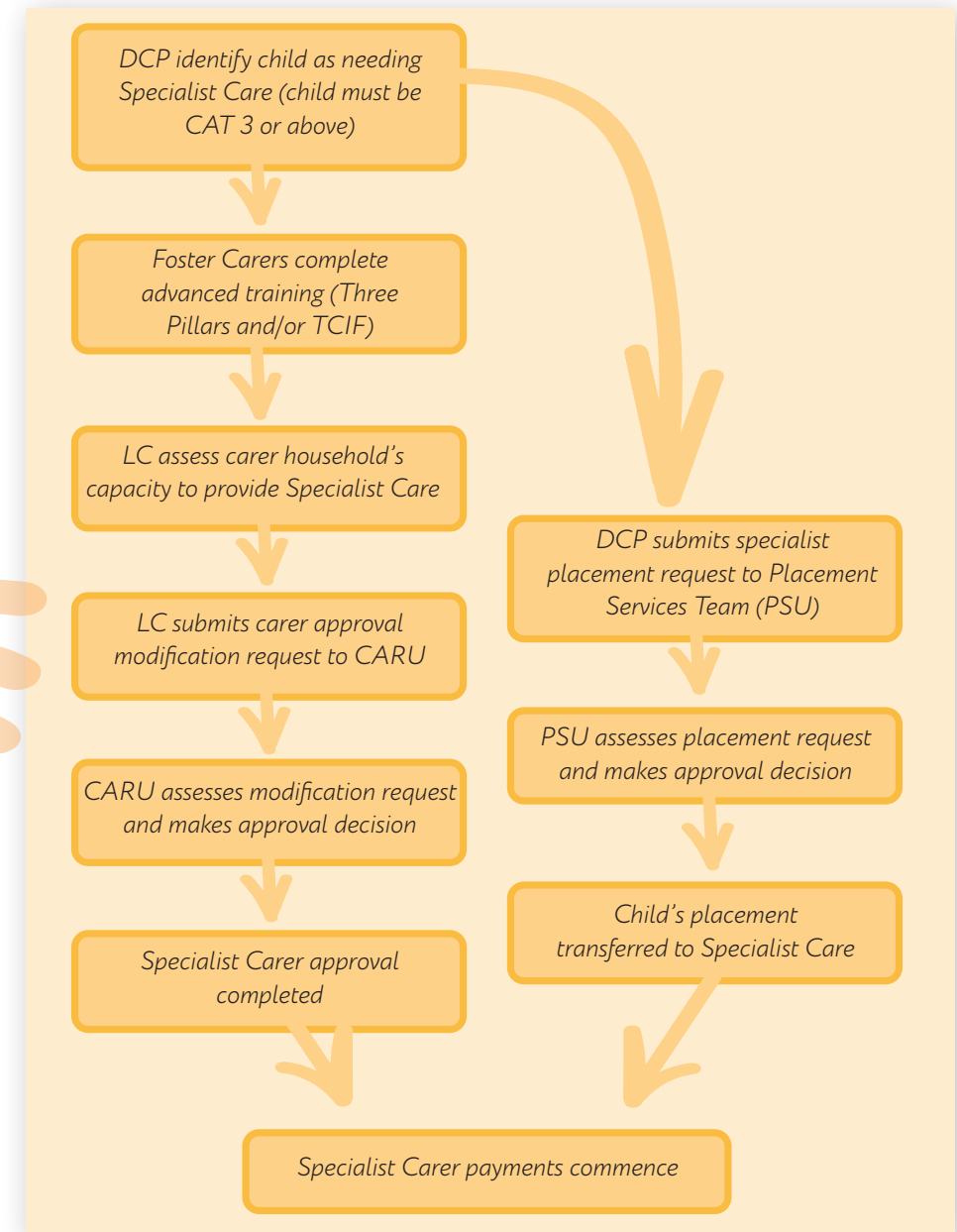
Guardianship (LTG) for a child in Specialist Care, however obtaining LTG will mean that DCP case management, foster care support and Specialist Carer payments cease for the child. It is important to thoroughly consider a child's and your family unit's potential long term support needs when exploring LTG.



Will I be able to take other placements?

This will be considered on a case by case basis in consultation with you, the care teams and therapists for all children involved, to determine what is in the children's and your family unit's best interests. Consideration needs to be given to the potential needs of all children at different developmental stages over time, as well as capacity to balance the children's needs alongside your family unit's wellbeing.

What's the process for transferring a child's existing placement to Specialist Care?



How to start?

If you would like to take the next step toward becoming a Specialist Foster Carer, you can submit a confidential enquiry online or contact our Foster Care team today.



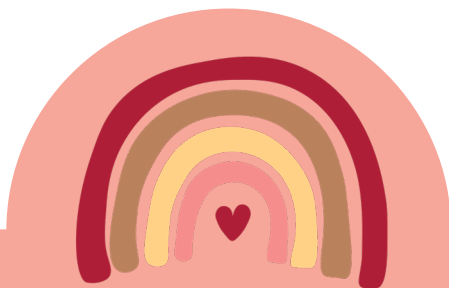
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