



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**

Who pays in WA?

A guide to payments and financial supports for
Community Foster and Family Carers in Western Australia



April 2026





Acknowledgement of Country and People

The Department of Communities proudly acknowledges Traditional Custodians throughout Western Australia (WA) and recognises their continuing connection to their lands, families and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures, and to Elders past and present.

Introduction

Caring for children and young people in the care of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Department of Communities is important and meaningful work. However, caring can also create extra costs for carers and their families.

Under the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA) (the Act), the CEO is given the legal responsibility for the care of a child who is placed in the CEO's care. These responsibilities include making decisions about the child's safety, wellbeing, and day-to-day needs – including decisions about financial support.

'Who Pays in WA?' explains:

- the financial supports available to help care for children in the CEO's care
- what costs are typically covered by carer subsidy or other allowances
- how access to funding differs for carers supported by the Department of Communities, and carers supported by Community Sector Organisations or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- how planning and approvals processes apply to different financial decisions
- where to seek advice, clarification or assistance if you have any questions.

'Who Pays in WA?' is a general guide that applies to all carers who support children in care in Western Australia, and describes:

- **Part 1** – Overview of payments and financial supports available to children in care and their carers
- **Part 2** – Financial support that all carers are eligible to receive from the Commonwealth Government
- **Part 3** – Financial support that carers receive if they are supported by Department of Communities
- **Part 4** – Financial support that carers receive if they are supported by a Community Sector Organisation or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
- **Part 5** – Financial support for children and carers when children are leaving care
- **Part 6** – Financial support for carers for children on a Protection Order (Special Guardianship)
- **Part 7** – Cost guidance for carers

If you are in doubt about who pays for what, discuss this with your caseworker before spending money, as payments and approvals vary depending on the child's circumstances.

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Overview of payments and financial support



Who is the Care Provider?

In Western Australia, carers can be supported by the Department of Communities (Communities), or by a Community Service Organisation (CSO) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO). We will call these 'Care Providers'. In Western Australia, most carers are supported by Communities. It is important that a carer knows which Care Provider supports them – whether that is Communities, an ACCO or a CSO. The below table will assist in identifying this:

Department of Communities	Community Sector Organisations or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
- Family Carers - Significant Other Carers - Community Carers - Community Foster Carers These carers are supported directly by a Communities District Office: - Armadale - Cannington - East Kimberley - Fremantle - Goldfields - Great Southern - Joondalup - Midland - Mirrabooka - Midwest Gascoyne - Bindjareb - Perth - Pilbara - Rockingham - South West - West Kimberley - Wheatbelt	- Key Assets – The Children's Services Provider - Lifestyle Solutions (Aust) Limited - MacKillop Family Services Limited - Life Without Barriers - Karla Kuliny Aboriginal Corporation - Kinship Connections Aboriginal Corporation - Wungening Aboriginal Corporation - Yorganop Association Incorporated - Australian Childhood Foundation - My Place WA Limited - Parkerville Children and Youth Care Inc - Uniting WA - Wanslea - South West Aboriginal Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation (Kwaba Bidi)

Financial support for carers of children in care

All carers are entitled to receive financial support to help meet the needs of children in the care of the CEO. This financial support comes from both the WA Government, and the Commonwealth Government. Some payments are made directly to carers, while others are accessed through the Care Provider.

The below table gives an overview of the funding type, and whether it is paid directly to carers, or it is accessed through the Care Provider.

Funding type	Description	Paid directly to carer	Accessed through the Care Provider
Carer subsidy	A payment to cover everyday costs of maintaining a child in a care arrangement, covering items such as food, utilities, transport, outings, haircuts, toys, personal hygiene items, and basic medical needs.	👍	
Special needs loading¹	A payment to cover costs for children who have extra care needs that create additional, regular and ongoing costs to meet these needs.	👍	
Clothing allowance	A payment to cover clothing as seasons change and a child grows.	👍	
Pocket money	A payment of pocket money for children.	👍	
Special purpose funding	Funding for expenses that are exceptional or extraordinary.		👍
Care arrangement support cost²	Funding for agreed supports and services that address a child's specific needs.		👍
Staying On Subsidy	A payment to a carer to continue to care for a child after they turn 18, and until the age of 21 years. This is accessed through the Home Stretch WA program.	👍	

¹ Only available to carers supported by Communities.

² Only available to carers supported by ACCOs or CSOs.

Financial support available from the Commonwealth Government



Services Australia (Centrelink)

Payments to carers

Carers may be eligible for a Centrelink payment because they are providing day-to-day care for their own children, or a child in care.

To explore potential eligibility for available payments, carers may refer to the [Services Australia](#) website.

Receiving a carer subsidy for a child in the CEO's care does not impact on your ability to receive Centrelink payments and is not considered taxable income. Likewise, receiving a Centrelink payment does not affect your ability to receive a carer subsidy.

All children in the care of the CEO who attend approved early childhood education and care services, as well as before and after school care, should apply for the [Child Care Subsidy](#) through Services Australia.

Payment to children

Many children and young people in the CEO's care are eligible for financial assistance from Services Australia (Centrelink). This is especially important for children with disability and young people preparing for adulthood who may qualify for Youth Allowance or the Disability Support Pension.

When a child in the CEO's care turns 15, the caseworker must talk with them about:

- their current financial supports
- future entitlements
- employment or study plans
- what payments they may be eligible for at 15 or 16 years of age.

To explore potential eligibility for available payments for a child, carers can visit:

- www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/youth-allowance
- www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/disability-support-pension

Financial support for carers supported by the Department of Communities



If carers are supported by the Department of Communities (Communities), funding is managed through Communities. The following section explains how funding works for carers supported by Communities.

Carer subsidy

Carers receive a carer subsidy to cover everyday costs of maintaining a child in a care arrangement. This includes costs such as food, utilities, transport, outings, haircuts, small toys, personal hygiene items, and basic medical needs.

A subsidy:

- is paid for every child in care that a carer is caring for
- is paid based on the child's age
- is paid every two weeks directly into a carer's bank account
- has a regional loading of +10% in Mid-West and Goldfields, or +20% in Kimberley and Pilbara
- is not taxable.

The below table outlines the fortnightly payments that a carer receives, based on their location, and the child's age.

Payment	0–6 yrs	7–12 yrs	13–17 yrs
Amount	\$523.88	\$616.85	\$709.83
+10%	\$576.26	\$678.54	\$780.82
+20%	\$628.65	\$740.23	\$851.80

Many carers support children by providing Short Break Care. Short Break Care is designed to provide a short period of care for a child which supports their overall care arrangement sustainability. Short Break carers receive a daily allowance, which is expected to cover the same items in a carer subsidy.

Payment: Short Break support	0–6 yrs	7–12 yrs	13–17 yrs
Daily subsidy	\$45.95	\$54.78	\$63.60
Daily subsidy country loading 10%	\$50.55	\$60.26	\$69.96
Daily subsidy country loading 20%	\$55.14	\$65.73	\$76.32

Carers are entitled to five days Short Break Care per month (further days require extended Short Break Care approval to avoid overpayment and are paid at the basic subsidy rate). A country loading of 10 per cent applies to carers in the Mid-West Gascoyne and Goldfields; and a country loading of 20 per cent applies to carers in East Kimberley, West Kimberley and Pilbara.

Pocket money

As part of the subsidy, carers are paid pocket money for the children they care for. Carers are responsible for ensuring this amount is provided directly to the child.

Payment	6–12 yrs	13–15 yrs	16–17 yrs
Pocket money Per fortnight	\$8	\$20	\$26

Young people who are in paid employment or receiving a Centrelink benefit are not eligible to receive pocket money or clothing allowance.

Young people aged 16–17 years will only receive pocket money in extenuating circumstances. This can be discussed further with your caseworker.

Clothing allowance

Carers receive both an initial clothing grant (paid once when a child first enters care) and a clothing allowance paid three times each year in January, May and September. This is to cover seasonal clothing, sleep wear, socks, underwear and everyday footwear. The amount included in the clothing allowance is based on a child's age:

Payment	0–6 yrs	7–12 yrs	13–17 yrs
Clothing allowance Paid 3 times/year (Jan, May, Sep)	\$203.40	\$267.63	\$455.00

Young people who are aged 16–17 years will only receive clothing allowance in extenuating circumstances. This can be discussed further with your caseworker.

Special needs loading

Some children in the CEO's care have additional care needs that require more time, attention or ongoing expenses than the carer subsidy is designed to cover. Special needs loading (SNL) is an extra payment that can be provided to carers when a child has regular, ongoing needs that create extra costs or require a higher level of care.

These needs may be related to:

- medical conditions
- physical or intellectual disability
- behavioural or emotional challenges
- short term situations such as hospitalisation or recovery, where the child temporarily needs more intensive care.

A caseworker must apply for SNL on a carer's behalf. SNL is paid fortnightly and directly to a carer as part their subsidy.

SNL is only available to carers supported by Communities. It is not paid to CSOs or ACCO carers, as these carers are eligible for care arrangements support costs.

Case support costs

Case support costs (CSC) are to help carers meet expenses that go beyond the everyday needs of a child in care. CSC may be used for things like:

- tutoring or education support
- specialist assessments or reports
- equipment or one-off purchases
- transport linked to a child's needs
- activities or programs

Using CSC will depend on the type and frequency of support required and level of associated costs. Caseworkers are responsible for applying for these supports, and wherever possible, requests for miscellaneous items should be made in advance.



Special purpose funding

Sometimes a child in the CEO's care will have needs that require a significant amount of funding – far beyond what can be covered through carer subsidy or CSC.

When this happens, special purpose funding (SPF) may be available. SPF is used for large, essential expenses (typically over \$2,000) that directly support a child's wellbeing, safety, development, or stability. SPF is used for situations where a child's needs are exceptional, urgent, or require a substantial investment. This includes:

- Specialist services or assessments – such as high-cost therapeutic programs, complex behavioural assessments, or specialist medical evaluations.
- Major equipment or supports – such as disability or mobility equipment that is essential for the child's daily functioning which cannot be covered by the National Disability Insurance Scheme or other disability service providers.
- Education related needs – such as private schooling or specialised learning supports when these are necessary for the child's development.
- Reunification or parent-contact related costs – when the costs are unusually high and essential to the child's care plan.
- Other extraordinary circumstances – where the child's needs cannot be met through other means.

SPF is not used for items that fall under normal case support costs – such as day care, counselling, orthodontics, or routine educational expenses.

Minor expenditure and reimbursements

Sometimes unexpected costs come up when caring for a child – for example, a last-minute school outing, an emergency item of clothing, or other small, unplanned needs. When this happens, carers can access support through minor expenditure processes.

What counts as minor expenditure?

Minor expenditure covers emergency or unplanned purchases up to \$50 per transaction, with a limit of \$100 per child per quarter. These funds are managed by the child's caseworker, who can either:

- reimburse carers quickly once receipts are provided, or
- provide the funds in advance if an unplanned cost is known (e.g. a spontaneous school event).

This process is designed for genuinely unexpected situations. Routine, predictable, or ongoing costs are not eligible and should always be discussed and approved in advance as part of the child's care planning.

When carers purchase items in an emergency

If you need to buy something urgently without prior approval, your caseworker will check the following before reimbursement:

1. The cost is not already covered by the basic foster care subsidy or by any special needs loading you receive.
2. You have an itemised receipt.
3. Each item or service costs no more than \$50.

Financial support for carers managed by a Community Service Organisation or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation

If carers are supported by a Community Service Organisation (CSO) or Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO), funding is managed through these Care Providers, in partnership with the Department of Communities. The following section explains how funding works for carers supported by ACCOs or CSOs.

Carer subsidy

The carer subsidy is a regular payment to help cover the normal, everyday costs of caring for a child. The carer subsidy is designed for day-to-day care. As children grow and their needs change, the subsidy level may also change.

CSOs and ACCOs use the Communities subsidy rate as a guide, but each Care Provider may pay a different rate.

Case support costs

Case support costs exist to help carers meet general expenses that go beyond the everyday needs of a child in care.

The Care Provider caseworker is responsible for applying for these supports, and wherever possible, requests for miscellaneous items should be made in advance.

Care arrangement support costs

Care arrangement support costs (CASC) are used to provide extra supports when a child needs more help than the regular subsidy and case support costs can reasonably cover. CASC is paid directly to the provider and needs to fund supports that are directly linked to the additional needs of the child.

CASC may be used to:

- support children with higher or changing needs
- respond quickly when extra help is needed
- support care arrangement stability, especially during stressful or unsettled periods
- help children stay connected to culture, family, and community
- fund therapeutic or engagement supports that help a child feel safe and settled.

CASC is guided by a twelve-month plan agreed by the Care Provider and Communities. Decisions are made by Communities and your Care Provider using their professional and cultural knowledge, always with the child's wellbeing at the centre.

Carer financial support eligibility



Funding as children are leaving care



Leaving care and becoming an adult

As children in the CEO's care approach adolescence and adulthood, planning for this monumental transition is essential. Carers play a vital role in helping young people build skills, confidence and connection as they grow into adulthood. Carers are pivotal in early planning conversations (ideally from around 15 years of age) to help young people prepare for becoming an adult.

Leaving care support helps young people move from care into adult life. This includes practical assistance, financial help, and guidance to access services. Carers should work with the caseworker and the young person to make sure these plans are included in their Leaving Care Plan.

Key financial supports

- **Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY, or Disability Support Pension**
Young people may be eligible for these payments through Services Australia once they meet age and study/work requirements. The caseworker will discuss Communities' duty to apply for entitlements that the young person is eligible to receive with you in advance and assist the young person to apply.

- **Transition to Independent Living Allowance**
A one-off payment through Services Australia to help with costs like rental bonds, furniture, course fees, or buying a car.
- **Home Stretch WA**
This program extends support for young people between 18 to 21 years, offering housing, financial assistance, and mentoring to make the transition smoother. The program consists of three financial opportunities of support:
 - **Staying On Subsidy** – A young person can be supported to continue 'staying on' with a foster or family carer to ensure they have a stable living arrangement until the age of 21.
 - **Housing Allowance** – A young person can be supported to access a Housing Allowance to help them afford a broader range of living arrangements with an emphasis on providing development of skills and supports to maintain stable, secure housing.
 - **Invest in Me** – Gives a young person the 'right' to a visible and secure financial safety net for aspirations and goals or for crisis relief. It is supported through the coaching relationship.

Bank accounts

Caseworkers can help with bank accounts whenever a child or young person needs one – whether it's to receive Centrelink payments, start learning about money, or keep their savings safe. They can support the child to ensure the account is set up correctly, the account is in the child's name, and what additional safeguards may be applied if the child is vulnerable to financial exploitation. Carers should not open accounts or manage the child's banking, but they may be asked to support the child to attend the bank or encourage responsible use of their money.

- For Centrelink entitlements, the Communities caseworker will assist eligible children and young people over 15 years to apply for entitlements and open an appropriate bank account to receive these payments. Carers cannot be signatories or have access to the child or young person's bank account. The bank account must be in the child or young person's own name.
- For children under the age of 15 years, the Communities caseworker or officer with delegated authority must open the child's bank account and be the signatory (if required).

Paying board or rent

Carers cannot charge board or rent to a child in their care. A young person's Youth Allowance, ABSTUDY or Disability Support Pension must not be used to replace a carer allowance or subsidy that has ceased.



Carers for children on Protection Order (Special Guardianship)



Under the Act, the Children's Court can grant a Protection Order (Special Guardianship). This is often referred to as a Special Guardianship Order (SGO). When a SGO is granted, the Parental Responsibility for the child moves to the nominated Special Guardian named by the Children's Court. This is usually the child's carer.

When a Protection Order (Special Guardianship) is granted, the Special Guardian becomes financially responsible for the needs of the child. However, there are still opportunities for the Special Guardian to receive financial support.

Carer subsidy

When a Protection Order (Special Guardianship) is granted, usually the Children's Court make an order that Communities should pay the Special Guardian a SGO subsidy. This will be paid directly into the Special Guardian's bank account on a fortnightly basis.

The fortnightly rate for a SGO subsidy is slightly higher than a carer subsidy, as it includes clothing allowance and pocket money.

Payment	0–6 yrs	7–12 yrs	13–17 yrs
Amount	\$554	\$655	\$793
+10%	\$609	\$721	\$872
+20%	\$665	\$786	\$951

Special needs loading

In some cases, Communities can continue to pay a special needs loading (SNL) for children on a SGO. This must be applied for, and assessed, by Communities. This SNL will be required to be reviewed every two years or as the needs of the child significantly change.

More information and support

The Communities SGO Support Team provides support to special guardians and the children and young people they care for across Western Australia.

The SGO Support Team's responsibilities include:

- Responding to enquiries from existing special guardians and the children they care for after an SGO is granted.
- Providing general advice to special guardians in relation to issues arising from their SGO, such as support with contact arrangements and managing relationships.
- Assisting special guardians with financial issues or enquiries, updating any assessments and responding to other requests for financial assistance.
- Linking and referring special guardians to CSOs.
- The process of transitioning from carer to special guardian.

Contact the SGO Support Team

Phone: 1800 630 215 | **Email:** SGOSupportTeam@communities.wa.gov.au



Cost guidance for carers



The following tables provide general guidance about common costs that arise when caring for a child in the CEO's care. If you are in doubt about who pays for what, you can ask your caseworker.

Types of child related costs: context and guidance

The tables below list common costs that arise when caring for a child in the CEO's care. They show whether an item is usually covered by the carer subsidy or whether it may be paid for by the Care Provider.

This list is not exhaustive. What is funded can vary, depending on the child's circumstances, their Care Plan, and any existing supports, for example, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, Child Care Subsidy, Centrelink.

Carers should speak with caseworkers if they are unsure who pays for something, a new or unexpected cost arises, the cost is higher than usual, or the item or activity is not already included in the child's Care Plan.

How to use the tables

First column	Second column	Third column
Common examples of costs or items carers may encounter.	 A 'thumbs up' indicates the cost is usually covered by the carer subsidy.	 A 'thumbs up' indicates the cost is usually paid by the Care Provider (Communities or ACCO/CSO), meaning it must be discussed and approved before purchase.

Just like the [Who Can Say OK in WA?](#) resource – which provides guidance to carers on decision-making for children in care – carers who are willing or able to purchase items for a child don't need to navigate these decisions on their own. The child's caseworker is available to talk through options and support the carer in making decisions.

Identity and culture

Supporting a child's cultural identity is essential to their sense of belonging and wellbeing.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Return to Country travel		👍
Attendance at a cultural events, activities, and celebrations that recognise the child's culture and/or religion	👍	
Attendance at a family funeral, including travel		👍
Clothing identifying and expressing culture	👍	

Household expenses

The carer subsidy payment is intended to cover basic household items required for everyday living, such as bed linen. Larger purchases, including furniture, electronics and whitegoods, are not covered by the carer subsidy and may be purchased by the Care Provider. These items must be discussed and approved before purchase.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Furniture, such as bookshelf, desk, wardrobe, bed		👍
Utilities, such as electricity and water	👍	
Large household appliances specific to needs of child		👍
Bed linen	👍	
General wear and tear	👍	
Minor damage to property (under \$250)		👍
Moderate to major property damage (over \$250) ³		👍
Mobile phone and internet	👍	
Birthday party expenses, including presents	👍	

³ Property damage may be eligible for insurance claims, and any insurance matters must be reported within a month of the incident occurring to be considered.

Clothing and personal expression

The carer subsidy and clothing allowance together cover a child's everyday clothing, including general items and standard haircuts. Fashion choices such as nail polish, makeup and simple jewellery are also included.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
General clothing and footwear		
Fashion preferences, including painting their nails, wearing jewellery, make up		
Haircut		
Hair colouring and additional/complex hair treatments		
Approved ear or body piercing		

Physical and mental health

The carer subsidy covers basic medical needs, including over-the-counter medications and routine medical, dental and allied health appointments. Ongoing or specialist treatment, mental health services, developmental assessments, surgery and treatment programs are considered additional expenses and can be covered through the Care Provider.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Over the counter medication		
Prescribed medication – once off		
Prescribed medication – ongoing		
Ongoing or once-off dental, optometrist, audiologist or allied health appointments		
Mental health supports such as counselling, psychology or psychiatry appointments		
Minor or major surgery (including local or general anaesthetics), where costs exceed those covered by the Public Health System		

Babies and toddlers

Everyday items required to care for babies and toddlers, such as dummies and formula, are included in the subsidy payment. Larger items, including cots, prams and car seats, are not covered and may be funded by your Care Provider with prior approval.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Dummy or other comfort toys		
Baby milk or formula, and baby feeding items such as bottles and highchairs		
Nappies and baby wipes		
Cots and bedding		
Pram and car seats		

Child care

Carers are required to apply for the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) through Services Australia before seeking any additional financial support. The CCS application should be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of child care. Costs for regular or ongoing babysitting, child care, kindergarten, and before or afterschool care may be covered by the Care Provider, where approved, and are generally paid directly to the child care provider rather than reimbursed to the carer.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Babysitting of child so carers can go out		
Child care and pre-kindergarten		
Before and after school care		
School holiday program		

Education

Some education-related costs are covered by the carer subsidy, including transport to and from school, school incursions and excursions, and school photographs. Other costs, such as private or independent school fees, are not covered and may be approved through a Care Provider where they align with the child's Care Plan or education support plan.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Public school fees		
School uniform		
School books		
Attending school camp		
Public transport costs		
School incursions and excursions		
School photos		

Leisure, sport and recreation

Participation in sport, recreation and creative activities is important for a child's development and wellbeing. The carer subsidy covers general activities such as incidental or one-off activities, for example entry to a play centre or art and craft supplies for home. Extra-curricular activities such as sports or music are typically covered by the Care Provider.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
School swimming lessons		
Private swimming lessons		
General activities such as school sports or after-school sport, music, theatre, crafts		
Club/sporting uniform		

Travel

Travel-related costs for the child, including passports, travel insurance, flights and accommodation, are not covered by the carer subsidy. The Care Provider may cover these costs for the child in the care arrangement if the travel is part of the child's Care Plan. Any requests to travel with a child in the CEO's care (including any costs) must be discussed and approved before travel arrangements are made. Carers are generally not reimbursed for costs after the travel has occurred if the travel was not approved prior. The costs outlined below only apply for the child in the care arrangement and will not cover carers or other family members.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Travel insurance		
Passport		
Flights and accommodation ⁴		

Gender affirming medical care

Children and young people in the CEO's care are entitled to safe, respectful and evidence-based health care. Gender-affirming medical care may include treatment planning, fertility preservation and therapeutic or cultural support services. These costs are not covered by the carer subsidy and may be covered by the Care Provider, where approved and aligned with the child's Care Plan. Any requests are subject to a case-by-case assessment with appropriate clinical advice and approval processes.

Who pays for:	Carer subsidy	Care Provider
Treatment planning (puberty blockers and/or hormone therapy)		
Fertility preservation (prior to transition)		
Support services (e.g. counselling, cultural or identity support)		

- 4 Flights and accommodation are considered on an individual basis, and there may be times where Communities does not approve travel, or may approve the travel but not the cost associated. It is important to talk to your caseworker about travel plans in advance and confirm any approval parameters prior to booking flights and accommodation.

More information and support

Fostering Connections

Fostering Connections is a service provided by Communities for all family and foster carers (irrespective of your Care Provider) who are looking for information and advice about the services and supports available.

Fostering Connections is also the place where carers can provide feedback and suggestions for future improvement to carers supports.

What Fostering Connections helps with

- Explaining subsidy payments and entitlements
- Assisting with travel approvals
- Clarifying mileage claims and reimbursements
- Answering any questions about carer supports.

Contact Fostering Connections

Web: www.communities.wa.gov.au/FosteringConnections

Email: fosteringconnections@communities.wa.gov.au

Phone: 1800 182 178 (free call)

Foster Care Association of WA (FCAWA)

FCAWA is an independent non-government organisation that supports and advocates for foster and kinship carers across WA. It offers resources, advice, and a strong voice for carers in shaping policies and services.

What FCAWA provides

- Advocacy and representation on issues affecting carers
- Access to resources and information
- Assistance accessing appropriate services
- Opportunities to connect with other carers.

Contact FCAWA

Web: www.fcawa.com.au

Email: enquiries@fcawa.com.au

Phone: 1800 497 101 (free call) or (08) 9242 4222

Advocate for Children in Care

Children and young people can seek support, information or raise a complaint through the [Advocate for Children in Care](#).

Contact the Advocate

- **Phone:** 1800 460 696 (free call)
- **Mobile:** 0429 086 508
- **Email:** advocate@communities.wa.gov.au
- **Online form:** www.communities.wa.gov.au/complaintschildrenyoungpeople

The Foster and Grand Carer Gold Card

The Foster and Grand Carer Gold Card (Gold Card) is a new initiative, which will provide eligible foster, family, SGO and Community carers, as well as grandcarers, with a range of discounts, credits and benefits over time.

How to register

The easiest way to register for the Gold Card is through the ServiceWA app; however, alternative options are available.

For information on the Gold Card, eligibility and how to register, visit [Foster and Grand Carer Gold Card](#).



Decision making and complaint management

Requests for payment or reimbursement are considered case by case, based upon the child's needs and best interests. If you disagree with a decision, you can follow the below steps with the Department of Communities.

Step 1

Speak with your Caseworker

Discuss the request and considerations, including the child's needs and financial implications.

Step 2

Escalate to → Team Leader → Assistant District Director → District Director

If your request is declined and you wish to seek a review, ask your caseworker to escalate to the Team Leader.

Step 3

Contact the Complaints Management Unit

If you remain dissatisfied, you can seek advice or lodge a complaint with Complaints Management Unit by calling 1800 333 325.



Definitions

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) means an organisation that is:

- (a) incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit;
- (b) controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people;
- (c) connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services; and
- (d) governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.

Act means the *Children and Community Services Act 2004* (WA).

Advocate for Children in Care (Advocate) is a position within the Department of Communities whose role it is to protect and promote the interests and rights of all children in the CEO's care to have a say in decisions and actions that affect them and in the services that are provided to them. The Advocate provides advocacy services to help children resolve issues and have decisions reviewed and supports them in using formal complaint and review processes.

Best interests of the child is a principle outlined in section 7 of the Act that requires the best interests of the child to be the paramount consideration in performing a function under the Act reflecting the need to keep the child safe, promote their care, welfare and development and where applicable, acknowledge their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural connections. In determining what is in the best interests of a child the matters in section 8 of the Act must be taken into account; this includes the child's participation in the decision-making process. The principle of child participation as set out in section 10 of the Act must be observed in relation to making decisions under the Act which are likely to have a significant impact on a child's life.

Care Arrangement is the term used to describe an arrangement for the placement of a child made under section 79(2) of the Act.

Care Arrangement Support Costs (CASC) is the additional cost required to support the child in their care arrangement, with direct reference to the child's particular complexity and needs. The CASC replaces Special Needs Loading, and some elements of Special Purpose Funding for carers with CSOs/ACCOS. Only children with a Needs Assessment Tool of 2–5 in Community Foster Care or Group Foster Care placed in the Community Sector will receive CASC.

Care Provider refers to either an ACCO, CSO or Communities, which is responsible for delivering foster and family care to children in the care of the CEO.

Carer means foster, family, community or significant other carers who care for a child in the CEO's care.

Family Carer is an approved carer who is a relative of a child in the CEO's care (parent, grandparent, stepparent, sibling, uncle or aunt, cousin).

Significant Other Carer is a type of family carer who is not a relative of the child in the CEO's care but would be included in the child's ecomap, has known and demonstrated an interest in the child and/or family for a significant period and belongs to the same cultural group.

Community Foster Carer is an approved volunteer who is willing and able to care for a child in the CEO's care on a temporary or long-term basis.

Community Carer is an approved carer who is from a culturally similar background as the child in the CEO's care.

Care Plan means a written plan that identifies the needs of the child in the CEO's care. It contains the information, plans and decisions created to meet the child's needs in nine areas: safety, care arrangement, health, education, social and family relationships, recreation and leisure, emotional and behavioural development, identity and culture, and legal and financial.

Care Team approach is central to how Communities works with children, parents carers, members of their community and professionals involved in their care.

Communities is the abbreviated term for Department of Communities.

Community Sector Organisations (CSOs) are non-government organisations, funded by Communities, to provide out of home care services. CSOs are usually the first point of contact for CSO foster and family carers.

Needs Assessment Tool (NAT) is a case practice tool used to assess the child or young person's needs against the dimensions of wellbeing. NAT levels range from level 1 where a child or young person has the usual range of behaviours for their age, to level 5 where a child or young person has complex or extremely complex needs that have a significant impact on multiple areas of functioning.

Senior Child Safety Practitioner – Care Services are sometimes known as Placement Officers, or Senior Officer Care Services. These Child Protection Workers are usually the first point of contact for Communities foster and family carers.

Short Break Care is temporary care that is designed to provide a short period of respite to a carer for a child which supports their overall placement sustainability.

Disclaimer: This guide is accurate at the time of publication (April 2026). The information provided in this guide is intended for general informational purposes only, to help you understand how certain costs may be managed or paid. It is not intended to be, and should not be taken as, financial advice, business advice, or legal advice. The information does not take into account your personal objectives, financial situation or needs and is not tailored to any particular circumstances. Please seek independent financial, business or legal advice from a qualified professional and consult all relevant agencies or bodies before making any decisions or taking action based on this guide, particularly if you are unsure how the information applies to you. This guide does not replace or override the advice or information provided by any relevant Commonwealth or State government body or agency. This guide should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional advice. While every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and current at the time of publication, the Department of Communities does not represent or warrant the information is accurate, complete or suitable for your particular circumstances. Please consult your caseworker if you need more information or visit www.communities.wa.gov.au/WhoPaysInWA.



Department of Communities

Postal address: Locked Bag 5000, Fremantle WA 6959

Telephone: 1800 176 888

Email: enquiries@communities.wa.gov.au

Website: www.communities.wa.gov.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) – Telephone: 13 14 50

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