



# Streamline Foster Carer and Adoption Assessment and Training



## Background

Released in April 2016, the former Department for Child Protection and Family Support, now Department of Communities, (the Department) reform strategy *Building a Better Future Out-of-Home Care Reform in Western Australia* outlined a number of actions to increase the Department's ability to recruit and support permanent foster carers for children in out-of-home care (OOHC).

This included the need to streamline the foster carer and adoption assessment and training processes to forge a closer link between adoption applicants and children in the OOHC system who may require permanent OOHC.

Currently, the Department's assessment and training processes for foster care and adoption<sup>1</sup> are separate despite there being considerable overlap in assessment requirements.

Applicants wishing to be assessed as both foster carers and prospective adoptive parents must go through separate assessment processes, resulting in the applicants providing much of the same information.

There is a prevailing community perception that foster care is a temporary care option only, with adoption seen as the only permanent care option. It is thought this has dissuaded potential foster carers from applying. In contrast to this perception there is a significant and growing need for permanent foster carers.

Streamlining the foster carer and adoption assessment and training processes will provide clarity for foster carers. As well as promoting community awareness of the genuine need for permanent foster carers, and supporting our foster carer recruitment activities.

## What is happening?

From 1 March 2017, the Department pathway for foster carer and adoption assessment and training has being streamlined.

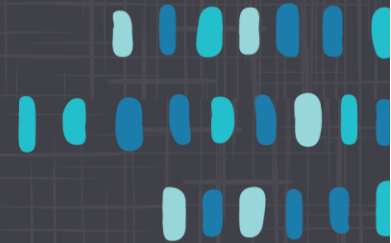
This will see the release of a range of forms and, tools, and an assessment report template to be used for both foster carer and adoption applicants.

Those undertaking either assessment process will follow an aligned pathway from enquiry through to approval.

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<sup>1</sup> Reference to adoption assessment and training processes, only refers to the adoption process for local and inter-country relinquished unknown children.





The table below outlines that the various changes that will occur in streamlining the foster carer and adoption assessment and training processes.

Phase	Assessment	Training
Phase One (March 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new combined <i>Suitability to Foster and/or Adopt Assessment Report</i>.</li> <li>The release of the updated Foster Carer Assessment Manual and the Adoption Assessment Manual to align with the new reform language, and associated policy changes of the streamlined pathway.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information sessions provided for assessors of foster carer and adoption applicants to update them on the new reform language, assessment report template and assessment manuals.</li> <li>Information session for foster carers and adoption applicants will commence, to align to the streamlined process.</li> <li>Foster carers will now all need to attend preparation training prior to Panel.</li> </ul>
Phase Two (mid 2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch a combined <i>Foster Carer and Adoption Assessment Manual</i> to guide assessors in completing assessments for foster carer, adoption or dual foster carer and adoption applicants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adoption applicants will transition to the new Education Seminar pathway.</li> </ul>
Phase Three (late 2017/early2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manual to be updated with any feedback received from the cross-sector foster carer panel and the adoption application committee.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal training for Assessors completing assessments of foster carer and adoption applicants.</li> </ul>

### **Benefits of streamlining the foster carer and adoption assessment and training processes**

- Will allow for an easier connection for prospective adoptive parents who wish to provide permanent care for a child in OOHC.
- Foster carer, adoption or dual foster carer and adoption assessments will follow an aligned pathway.
- An updated and streamlined range of forms, tools and assessment report templates will be used in the assessment of both foster carer and adoption applicants.
- Will result in recruiting more permanent foster carers for children in OOHC.

For information about the reforms, please refer to the Reform page on the Department’s website (<http://www.dcp.gov.au/ChildreninCare/Pages/OOHCReform.aspx>).

