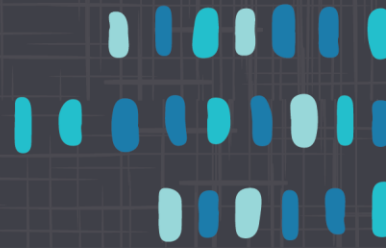




Changes to the foster carer and adoption assessment process



Changes to the foster carer and adoption assessment process

The Department of Communities’ *Building a Better Future Out-of-Home Care Reform in Western Australia* (the reform plan) report outlined multiple key reforms which highlighted the importance of realigning the foster carer and adoption assessment and training processes. Specifically, the reform actions will:

- i) Simplify carer type, aligning it to a child’s phase of care.
- ii) Ensure consistent, high quality foster carer standards through a consistent foster carer assessment process across Western Australia.
- iii) Streamline the process for applicants who want to be assessed as both a foster carer and adoption applicant.

What changes are coming?

There will be a number of changes to both the foster carer and adoption assessment processes. These align with six specific reform actions:

- Implement temporary and permanent carer types (Reform Action 4).
- Streamline prospective adoption and foster carer training and assessment process (Reform Action 6).
- Broaden the definition of foster care to “a non-family care arrangement” where children are cared for in a place that is the carer’s primary residence (Reform Action 57).
- Establish a cross-sector foster carer panel (Reform Action 59).
- All foster carer applicants be required to complete the approved preparation training prior to approval as a carer. Metropolitan foster carers to attend in-person training (Reform Action 61).
- Add competency requiring foster carers to demonstrate their ability to support the cultural needs of children (Reform Action 63).

Who will these changes affect?

Both existing carers and future applicants may be affected by the changes to the assessment processes.

Applicants	Existing carers
Department of Communities (the Department) foster carer applicants.	Approved Department or CSO foster carers.
Community sector organisation (CSO) foster carer applicants.	Approved foster carers or employees meeting the foster carer definition transferring to the Department or CSO.
Adoption applicants for local and inter-country relinquished unknown children.	Existing employees who meet the foster carer definition.
Dual foster carer and adoption applicants.	





When are the changes happening?

The reform actions identified above will be implemented from 1 March 2017.

Department and CSO staff will be required to identify existing applicants, approved foster carers or existing employees who meet the foster carer definition to transition them to the post-reform processes.

What if a foster carer wants to change organisations (portability)?

All foster carer applicants who have had their assessment reports submitted through the cross-sector foster carer panel (the Panel) for endorsement will be able to move to another agency or organisation.

A separate process is being developed for foster carers who will be transitioning to another agency as result of the out-of-home care (OOHC) recontracting process. The *Exit and Transition and Planning Guide* (the Guide) will define the transition requirements for CSO foster carers and employees, who meet the foster carer definition and may be impacted by the recontracting process.

How will the current OOHC procurement process impact on this?

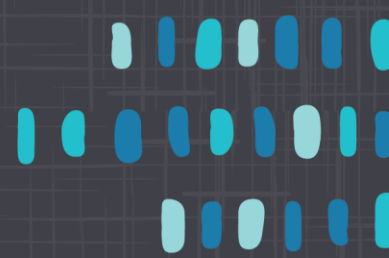
New contracts for OOHC care arrangements with CSOs will commence from January 2018. The changes to assessment processes will be well embedded before the new contracts are initiated.

Transitioning Foster Carers from 1 March 2017

Foster carer assessment manual, templates and forms from 1 March 2017

The foster carer assessment manual, templates and forms will be available for use from 1 March 2017. The table below outlines the potential impact/s on foster carer applicants and foster carers at the different approval stages.

Already approved	All foster carers approved before 1 March 2017.	Not applicable.
Commenced, but not approved	All foster carer applicants who have commenced the assessment process before 1 March 2017, but are not yet approved.	Agency specific assessment manual, assessment report template and forms <u>may</u> be used.
Not yet commenced	All foster carer applicants who commence the assessment process from 1 March 2017.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New assessment manual and forms must be used for Department foster carer assessments. CSOs can use these as a resource alongside agency specific resources. Assessment template report <u>must</u> be used for foster carer assessments submitted to the cross-sector foster carer panel.



Carer type from March 2017

From March 2017 foster carers will need to identify their preferred carer type/s, as defined in the reform plan. The table below outlines the potential impact/s on foster carer applicants and foster carers at the different approval stages.

Already approved	All foster carers approved before March 2017.	All approved foster carers must identify their carer type (temporary/permanent or both) at their next annual foster carer review from 1 March 2017 (to be completed within 12 months). This needs to be recorded in Assist. CSOs can report this information to the Child and Carer Connection Hub.
Commenced, but not approved	All foster carer applicants who commence the assessment process before March 2017, but are not yet approved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carer type <u>must</u> be identified (temporary/permanent or both) for all foster carers. Agency specific preparation training <u>may</u> be used.
Not yet commenced	All foster carer applicants who commence the assessment process from March 2017.	Carer type <u>must</u> be identified (temporary/permanent or both) for all foster carers.

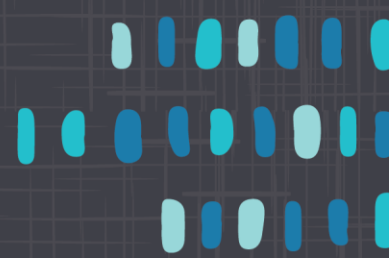
Compulsory foster carer preparation training from 1 March 2017

From the 1 March 2017 all foster carer applicants are required to complete compulsory foster carer preparation training, prior to their assessment is submitted to the cross-sector foster carer panel for endorsement. The table below outlines the potential impact/s on foster carer applicants and foster carers at the different approval stages.

Already approved	All foster carers approved before 1 March 2017.	Not applicable
Commenced, but not approved	All foster carer applicants who commence the assessment process before 1 March 2017, but are not yet approved.	Agency specific preparation training <u>may</u> be used.
Not yet commenced	All foster carer applicants who commence the assessment process from 1 March 2017.	<u>All foster carers</u> complete preparation through the Department prior to the assessment report submitted to the cross-sector foster carer panel for endorsement.

Foster carer endorsement – Cross-sector Foster Carer Panel from March and May 2017

A new initiative is the cross-sector foster carer panel which endorses foster carer assessment report, provided by the Department and/or CSOs. The purpose of the cross-sector foster carer panel is to achieve consistent high quality foster carer standards throughout the OOHC sector and improve the care experiences of children and young



people. The table below outlines the potential impact/s on new foster carer applicants from the Department and/or CSOs.

Prospective Department foster carers	All foster carer assessment reports from the Department are considered through the cross-sector foster carer panel, for endorsement, from March 2017.
Prospective CSOs carers	All CSO foster carer assessment reports are considered through the cross-sector foster carer panel for endorsement, from August 2017.

Transition completed by 1 November 2017

The Department has allowed for a transition period from 1 March to 31 October 2017. From 1 November 2017 the reform actions will come into effect; the table below lists requirements for foster carer applicants to be met, by both the Department and CSOs.

All foster carer applicants	All foster carers applicants from 1 November 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New assessment manual and forms must be used for Department foster carer assessments. CSOs can use these as a resource alongside agency specific resources. • Carer type must be identified (temporary/permanent or both) for all foster carers. • All foster carers complete preparation training provided by the Department, or in regional areas in partnership with CSOs. • Assessment template report <u>must</u> be used for foster carer assessment reports. • All foster carer assessment reports are submitted to the cross-sector foster carer panel for endorsement.
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From 1 January 2018

Foster Carer cultural competency¹

Cultural competency will be gazetted in the *Children and Community Service Regulations 2006* (the Regulations) which will come into effect 5 January 2018. The table below outlines the potential impact/s on foster carer applicants and foster carers at the different approval stages.

¹ The cultural competency will impact all individuals who are assessed against the foster carer competencies set out in the *Children and Community Services Regulations 2006*.



Already approved	All carers assessed against the foster carer competencies and approved before 5 January 2018	All foster carers and family carers who are approved before 5 January 2018 will be offered cultural competency training within eighteen months. After eighteen months all approved carers assessed against the foster carer competencies would be subject to reviews and revocations on the basis of the new competency.
Commenced, but not approved	All carers assessed against the foster carer competencies who commence the assessment process before 5 January 2018 but are not yet approved	<u>All carer applicants</u> must be assessed against the cultural competency.
Not yet commenced	All carers assessed against the foster carer competencies who commence the assessment process from 5 January 2018	<u>All carer applicants</u> must be assessed against the cultural competency.

Foster Carer Definition²

From January 2018, it is expected that the individuals who meet the foster carer definition (irrespective of employment status) will need to be assessed against the foster carer competencies, as outlined in the table below.

All individuals who meet the broadened foster carer definition from 1 January 2018	Individuals who meet the broadened foster carer definition will need to be assessed against the foster carer competencies. The <i>Exit and Transition and Planning Guide</i> will define the transition period requirements for individuals to complete the post-reform process.
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Adoption Reform transition and implementation

One of the reform actions has been to streamline the foster carer and adoption assessment and training processes; the implementation will commence on 1 March 2017. The aim has been to encourage adoption applicants to consider providing permanent care for children and young people in OOH. The table below outlines the various steps on adoption applicants at the different approval stages.

² A separate factsheet will be released to provide further detail about the foster carer definition and any associated processes.



All applicants who commence the Adoption process before 1 March 2017, but are not yet approved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-reform assessment report template and forms <u>may</u> be used.• Pre-reform training <u>may</u> be used.• Education seminars provided by third party organisation until 30 June 2017.
All applicants who commence the Adoption process from 1 March 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New assessment report template and forms <u>must</u> be used.• Permanent Care information session must be attended.
All applicants who commence the Adoption process from 1 July 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New assessment report template and forms <u>must</u> be used.• Permanent Care information session must be attended.• New Education seminar pathway must be used (for Preparation for Adoption, and Separation and Attachment).

Please note when referring to the adoption reform transition it refers to local and inter-country of relinquished unknown children. The reform actions do not impact other types of adoption.

More detailed information can be found within the *Transitional Plan: Guidance on changes to the foster care and adoption assessment process* document.