

# Carer Type

## Permanency decision-making for children

The Department of Communities’ (the Department) permanency planning policy focuses on making earlier, permanency decisions for children in out-of-home care (OOHC). When a child is in OOHC, the first permanency priority is always to safely reunify children with their parents. If this is not possible within a reasonable timeframe, the next best option is a permanent care arrangement with a family carer, foster carer or other care arrangement.

In August 2016, the Department began identifying children in OOHC by the phase of care they are in. This reform action in the Department’s *Building a Better Future Out-of-Home Care Reform in Western Australia* reform plan was to support permanency decision making by identifying where a child in OOHC is in their permanency journey.

Phase of care for a child	Definition	Orders included
Temporary Care	The phase of OOHC where the Department is assessing if reunification with the parents is likely, or is working towards reunification, and no court decision has been made for the long-term care of a child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provisional protection and care</li> <li>• Protection order (time-limited)</li> <li>• Negotiated placement agreements</li> <li>• Placement service</li> <li>• Pre-adoptive placement</li> </ul>
Permanent Care	The phase of OOHC where a court order has been made for a child to remain in the long-term legal care of the Department, or with people other than their biological parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection order (until 18)</li> <li>• Protection order (special guardianship)</li> <li>• Adoption order</li> <li>• Australian Government delegation</li> </ul>

The role of a carer is intrinsically linked to where a child is on their permanency pathway. During a temporary phase of care, a carer can play a central role in supporting a child through the reunification process by providing emotional and practical support. During a permanent phase of care, a carer’s role will have increased focus on supporting a child to develop and maintain deep and enduring relationships.

Carers and potential carers want early clarity on the type of role and commitment they are providing for children in OOHC. The new phase of care focus will help achieve this.

### What is happening?

From March 2017, all carers (including pre-adoptive carers and prospective adoptive parents) will have the opportunity to identify as temporary carers, permanent carers or both.

Once the changes are implemented in the Assist database, all newly approved carers will be recorded by their carer type. All existing carers will be identified and recorded by carer type at the earliest opportunity.



Carer Type	Definition
Temporary Carer	A temporary foster carer will care for a child where no final decision has been made for their legal care future (a child in a temporary phase of care). Temporary carers can also provide temporary care for a child in instances such as short break care, pre-adoptive care or in an emergency.
Permanent Carer	A permanent foster carer will care for a child when a decision has been made for them to live permanently out of their parent's care (a child in a permanent phase of care).

## Impact on foster carers

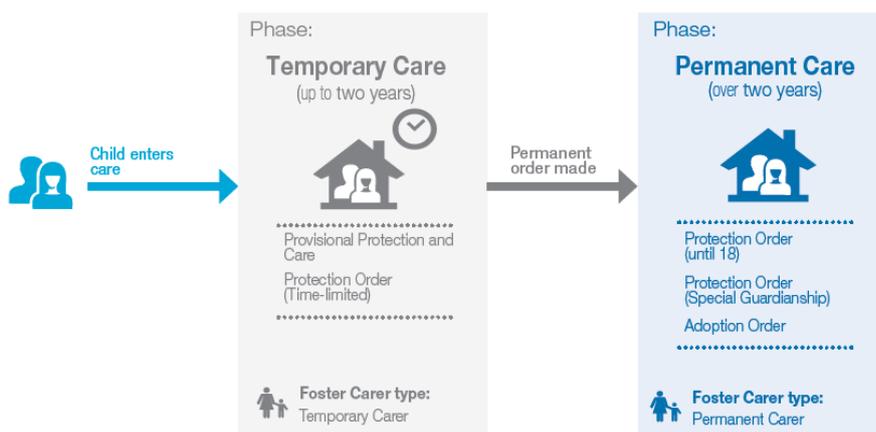
All carer applicants regardless of carer type will be assessed against the foster carer competencies.

Temporary and permanent carers will have different roles, expectations and responsibilities for each carer-type. The differences in roles will be clearer, allowing for foster carers to be more informed when they begin caring for a child in OOHC.

Carers will be able to provide both temporary and permanent care for children. For example, a carer may be a temporary carer when a child first enters OOHC and become the child's permanent carer as the child's phase of care changes.

## How will this benefit the out-of-home care system?

Introducing carer types will assist in providing a consistent and clear message to prospective carers about:



- the types of carers required in the OOHC system;
- the responsibilities and expectations of carers providing the different types of care.

It will also assist in the recruitment of permanent carers, including people who currently would favour adoptive care.

The use of carer types will also help to reduce care arrangement moves through:

- supporting the matching of children with carers that are motivated and able to provide temporary and permanent care; and
- supporting early matching of children requiring permanent care with permanent carers.

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