



Strong carers, stronger children a KCV Briefing Paper

An overview of the *Strong carers, stronger children* policy framework issued by the Victorian Government in October 2019.

It is designed to strengthen the supports available to kinship, foster and permanent care families.

Kinship carers wishing to keep informed about the implementation of this action plan should check to KCV website or contact the KCV office for an update.

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The *Strong carers, stronger children* policy framework issued by the Victorian Government in October 2019 is designed to strengthen the supports available to kinship, foster and permanent care families. Its aim is to ensure that “all children live with carers who are supported to create a safe and nurturing home for as long as they need it.” The strategy has 6 broad goals, which are accompanied by strategies and actions.

Goals and strategies - from the policy framework “Strong carers, stronger children”

GOAL 1 Finding children a home

Finding a safe, nurturing kinship carer or foster carer and ensuring connection with family is maintained

Strategies:

- Strengthen family-finding capabilities
- Support Aboriginal-led and managed family and carer finding
- Grow a pool of carers to meet the needs of children in care
- Improve the permanent care assessment process
- Review the Foster Care Model
- Learn from alternative models of home-based care
- Enable carers to better facilitate children and young peoples' connection to family, community and culture

GOAL 2 Preparation for caring

Carers understand their role, are ready and have what they need to care and provide for the specific needs of the children placed with them

Strategies:

- Improve induction to caring, including an awareness of culturally safe care
- Improve consistency and timeliness of information and document sharing where it relates to the day-to-day care of a child
- Provide support to kinship carers to meet a child's educational and developmental needs
- Provide carers with timely access to peer support before they begin caring for a child, or when is most appropriate

GOAL 3 Valuing, informing and empowering carers

Carers are valued and empowered to participate in decision-making affecting the children they care for

Strategies:

- Increase the focus of workers, agencies and the department on the carer experience
- Empower carers to participate in planning decisions that affect the care arrangement
- Make planning and decision-making processes more transparent and inclusive of carers and young people
- Develop new approaches and embrace new technology to communicate with carers

GOAL 4 Training

Carers are effectively trained to provide safe, stable, quality and culturally connected care

Strategies:

- Continuously improve the suite of training packages so it is comprehensive and contemporary
- Make training more flexible and accessible, including through harnessing new technology
- Develop more tailored training for carers of Aboriginal children and culturally and linguistically diverse children
- Make training more available to permanent carers

GOAL 5 Supporting carers

Carers have access to responsive, high-quality systems of support

Strategies:

- Connect carers with social, peer and community support networks
- Assist carers to navigate supports available for children in their care
- Re-design carer support funding to make it more transparent, timely, flexible and targeted
- Improve telephone/online carer support services
- Explore respite options, including maintaining connections with extended family and facilitating participation in recreational and sporting activities
- Embrace technology to make family contact easier for all parties

GOAL 6 Stability and permanency

Carers provide nurturing lifelong relationships, enabling family preservation or reunification or providing a permanent care arrangement

Strategies:

- Develop a structured/supportive model for carers where children are transitioning to:
 - their parents through reunification
 - another care arrangement
 - into permanent care
- Improve support for permanent carers, including:
 - transition support
 - training
 - link-ups to universal and specialised services and community and peer support

Follow up action as decided by the Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group

Actions 2020-21:

- 1** Undertake a state-wide census on all carers to develop carer profiles and baseline data to inform and improve program development and service delivery to carers
- 2** Explore and build on alternative home-based care models

Actions 2020-21:

- 3** Review information to carers about child or young person when care arrangement commences, with a view to improve consistency and timelines of information and document sharing where it relates to the day to day care of a child
- 4** Increase the number of kinship carers accessing the first supports program under the new kinship care model

Actions 2020-21:

- 5** Review local practices in regards to carer teams with a view to developing local solutions that promote and facilitate consistent carer participation in care team meetings particularly during the establishment phase of a placement to facilitate a collaborative inclusive and cohesive team around the child or young people
- 6** Develop a companion piece for carers of Aboriginal children as part of the Wungurilwil Gagapduir: Aboriginal children and families Agreement Strategic Action Plan

Actions 2020-21:

- 7** Make cultural safety training available for all carers, to support caring for culturally diverse children

Actions 2020-21:

- 8** Review the Client Support Funding Framework and respond to findings with a view to achieving greater flexibility, responsiveness and transparency on funding decisions
- 9** Undertake a review of the critical documentations which should be provided to carers, including passports, birth certificates, Medicare and other documentation and develop a strategy that facilitates and commits to providing carers with critical documentation in a timely manner.
- 10** Publish information to assist organisations and carers understand the relevant incident processes including CIMS, Reportable Conduct Scheme and Suitability Panel

Actions 2020-21:

- 11** Develop information for permanent carers that outlines relevant roles and responsibilities, assessment process, available supports and key information during the planning stages and once permanent care has been granted

The *Strong carers, strong children* policy, strategies and actions all emerge from comprehensive discussions between the DHHS and organisations working with carers, including KCV. The work to develop this strategy commenced soon after 2010 when the first comprehensive package of support for kinship carers was enacted. Since that time KCV has been engaged with DHHS in discussions about what is working well and what is not working well for kinship carers. KCV acknowledges the commitment of DHHS to the thorough processes of consultation and shared reflection that gave rise to this framework and looks forward to an implementation phase that is equally as collaborative and mindful of the needs of kinship carers.