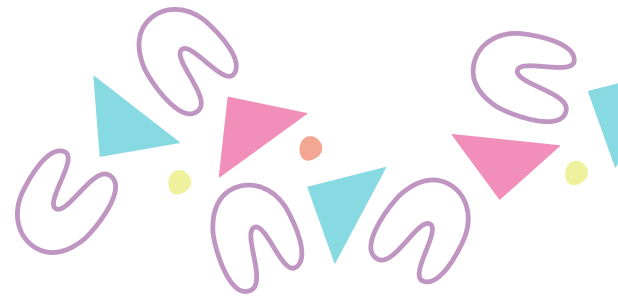




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SERVING CHILDREN, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES



Kinship Care

Your guide to becoming a kinship carer





We are Key Assets Australia

Key Assets Australia has been operating in Australia since 2007 and is connected with the Martin James Foundation, an international not-for-profit organisation. We share our knowledge and experience which is mutually beneficial.

During this time we have developed a strong reputation as an innovative leader in the child and family welfare sector.

As a not-for-profit we are passionate about delivering outstanding services that enable all children and families to achieve their potential.

We can draw on our group's wealth of knowledge, safeguarding and child protection practice, therapeutic models of intervention, academic research and qualitative programs to continually strive to improve the support and services we offer our carers and families.

When we meet and talk with foster and kinship carers across Australia where Key

Assets Australia (KAA) operates, we hear such powerful stories that motivate people to become carers. We are always inspired by the positive impact that our carers have on the lives of each and every child or young person in their care.

Good caring requires preparation, training, and assistance from your support team to stay connected. Celebrating the big and the small wins together with your friends and family.

We look forward to supporting you on your carer journey, creating positive and lasting outcomes for children, young people and families together.



Important Considerations about this document

To protect the privacy and confidentiality of children and young people, all names in this document have been changed, and stock images are used in the stories shared. These stories aim to reflect the experiences and impact of foster and kinship care without revealing personal information. Throughout this document, "Kids in care" refers to children and young people in foster care; "Carer" refers to foster carers, who provide support and care for these children and young people; "KAA" stands for Key Assets Australia.





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Who are Kinship Carers?

Our dedicated kinship carers look after children and young people known to them such as extended family members, friends of the family or live in the same community. In some situations they support children and young people to return to their families. Where this is not possible, carers may provide long term care. Kinship carers are the preferred carers for children as they support children and young people stay connected to their culture, faith and identity.

Why have I been approached to be a Kinship Carer?

You may have been asked to be a kinship carer to care for a child or young person you have a relationship with. This may have been unexpected or something you were thinking about for a while. It's normal to have questions, and Key Assets Australia is here to answer questions and guide you through the process. Sometimes, children and young people may not be able to live with their parents for many reasons, such as a parent's illness, an unsafe relationship, or a situation where their well-being is not secure. For a child to enter care, they will have been assessed that their care environment will be unsafe or at significant risk of harm. Some kinship carers are surprised or upset to learn that children entering their care may have experienced neglect and physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Key Assets Australia is available to support kinship carers through the kinship carer application process and to meet the needs of the children and young people in your care.



Who can be a Kinship carer?

At KAA, the carer, whether single or in a relationship, needs to be available to meet the individual needs of the child or young person and have a connection with them.

We focus on your ability to:

- provide a safe, caring and supportive environment for children and young people
- to work as part of a team and the local legislation.

We welcome enquiries from people from all cultures, sexual orientation and gender identities. Kinship carers can rent or own their own home, be married, partnered or single. A kinship carer is required to have an appropriate space for children and young people.

Our preference is for children to have their own bedroom and we can assess if it is suitable for children to share, for example, a sibling group.

Being a kinship carer takes commitment, enthusiasm and a genuine desire to make a positive and lasting difference.

Once approved, KAA Kinship Carers experience the satisfaction of knowing that they support the child to remain connected to their family, culture and community.



The journey to becoming a Kinship Carer

Receiving this booklet is just the first stage in the process to becoming approved as a kinship carer. The diagram shows the 'journey' that you will follow:



The assessment process usually takes from 3-6 months, depending on factors such as your availability to attend training and assessor visits.

Key Assets Australia is committed to keeping your personal information safe in line with the Privacy Act 1988. Ask for our information sheet if you would like to know more about our commitment to you.



You'll need to provide us with:

- ▲ A medical questionnaire completed by your GP.
- ▲ A minimum of 3 referees who know you and your family well.
- ▲ If you are in employment, a reference from your employer.
- ▲ School references will be completed for all children living in the household.
- ▲ Ex-partner references, if safe to do so, are required when there is shared care of a child under 18 years old.

The following checks will be carried out during the assessment process:

- ▲ National Police Clearance and background check on all adult members of the household and any adult regular visitors.
- ▲ All adult members of the family and regular visitors to the household will need to apply for a Working with Children Check.
- ▲ Standard Safety compliance check on your home
- ▲ If you have lived overseas we may undertake an overseas criminal history check.

Kath and David's Story

Kath and David already have grown-up children, they now care with Key Assets Australia and are currently caring for their five biological grandsons.

Kath lives with her husband David, her five grandchildren, five dogs, and their resident pet snake. Aiden is 13 years old, Sam is 12, Simon is 11, and Paul and Kayden are 9.

Kath and David began their carer journey seven years ago when the boys entered care. "We were first with the department, and then, with great luck, we were allocated to KAA, which was truly meant to be.

"Key Assets Australia has been a breath of fresh air. They have a great understanding of our and the children's needs."

"Three of the boys moved in in January and the others in May. We have only cared for our grandchildren. I was still working when the three boys came to live with us. Kayden has a disability, which required me to stop working to meet his needs."

Kath's focus has been supporting and managing the boy's emotional well-being. The biggest reward for Kath has been watching them grow and develop.

"The support from Key Assets Australia has been brilliant. All the staff members are lovely, compassionate and understanding. They look at the whole picture and do what is best for the children and the carers. They handle this professionally"

"I've attended training courses with KAA that have really helped. We also have great support from our school principal and the school community."

When thinking about becoming a kinship carer, Kath urges anyone interested to consider the rewards that can be achieved with children when we don't give up. All children deserve a safe and secure childhood where they can create lifelong memories.

"It's been a completely life-changing experience, and I couldn't imagine doing anything else now. I didn't realise how much I had to offer, I feel like I have had another opportunity to raise my children." Kath said, "I would encourage anyone thinking of caring to give it a go"



**Our purpose is to achieve positive and lasting outcomes
for children, families and communities.**



Key Assets Australia's Therapeutic Approach

Recognising the importance of carers is a primary focus at Key Assets Australia (KAA) so that they can provide the best care to children and young people.

We offer the following supports:

1. Therapeutic support - Our staff are skilled and knowledgeable in the needs of children who have experienced trauma. We have therapists who can support children or carers directly.
2. Out-of-hours support - We provide KAA carers with 24 hours 7 days a week on-call service with one of our KAA social workers.
3. Carer buddy - KAA carers can be matched with a mentoring carer in their area to provide additional support and guidance.
4. Support workers - A pool of workers that may be utilised for additional support.
5. Respite - All full-time KAA carers are encouraged to access respite care.
6. External counselling and support are available when needed.
7. Financial support - A carer allowance is provided.
8. Carer Training - Online and face-to-face training arranged to meet the needs of KAA carers plus access to child specific resources.
9. Cultural Practice Lead - to provide support to carers to meet the cultural needs of First Nations People.
10. Carer Events - Family days for KAA carers with their children and activity days just for the children to give the carers a break in the holidays.
11. Carers' coffee mornings - We offer regular groups for KAA carers to get together and connect with each other, these can be offered online.
12. Recognition and awards - KAA likes to acknowledge achievements, milestones and anniversaries of KAA carers and children.
13. We consult with KAA carers regularly so we can constantly improve the services we provide including carer reviews, regular carer surveys and carer groups.



Frequently asked questions

Q1.

Why do I need to be assessed to be a kinship carer?

Australian legislation requires all kinship and foster carers to undergo a thorough assessment process. We are here to answer any questions you may have throughout your application and carer journey.

Q2.

If I am going to be the main kinship carer, do you need to carry out checks on my partner and adult household members?

Caring involves everyone in the household, and they will be included in the assessment process. Checks are required for all adults living or visiting the home.

Q3.

Can a child in my care share a bedroom with one of my own children?

Key Assets Australia prefers children to have their own bedroom, which provides them with their private space. Sometimes this may not be possible. Some children can share with siblings. Key Assets Australia can talk with carers about their living arrangements.

Q4.

Can I still go out to work and be a kinship carer?

It depends, as children in kinship care have a range of needs. Some children will need a caregiver to be home full-time, whereas with other children their caregiver may be able to work full or part time.

Q5.

What is my role in family time?

Encouraging connection with family is important for all children as it helps them to develop their identity and learn about who is in their family. Family time, for example, visits or phone calls, forms part of their plan and is unique for each child. All caregivers are required to demonstrate a commitment to children and young people having meaningful family contact, where deemed to be safe and appropriate.

Key Assets Australia supports children's connections with family whilst also understanding this may at times present some challenges. We will listen to everyone's views and concerns to ensure children's wishes are considered and support is provided. Key Assets Australia works with kinship carers to find solutions that work for everyone.

Q6.

Is there financial support offered for kinship carers?

All kinship carers receive an allowance for each child in their care. It is intended to cover the child's living costs such as food, clothes, basic travel, basic medical costs, educational expenses, pocket money, recreational activities, birthday and Christmas gifts etc. At times there may be additional expenses in caring for a child. There may be other financial supports that are applicable depending on your circumstances and the child's needs and expenses. Kinship carers are encouraged to speak to their KAA Worker about any other supports that may be applicable. If you have any concerns about finances preventing you from applying to be a kinship carer, we encourage you to discuss this with us to see if we can assist in any way.

Q7.

Can I look after other children?

Kinship carers are approved to care for specific children only. A household can decide to apply to care for children and young people they are not connected to but are required to complete an assessment to become a general foster carer.





Janine's Story

My household consists of my foster son Jason, myself and my partner (Ash) who we see on weekends. We really enjoy taking Jason to various outings, whether it is a day at the park or the beach. We always try to become involved in any activities Jason is interested in. I also have three beautiful grown-up children (not living at home) and two amazing respite carers, who are so much more than that.

I became a foster carer 5 years ago, it was something I had always wanted to do. I was approached by a family friend who wanted her child, to go to a family member. When she asked me, I was very happy to say yes and I knew I would need support to meet his cultural needs.

I decided to care for Key Assets Australia as I liked the fact that they can see the potential in someone who doesn't always 'fit the mould'.

It took time for Jason to settle and for me to understand how to meet all of his emotional needs. I thought if I loved him as much as I did, he would feel the same. It was so special

when we made progress and he started to trust me. When I talk with my social worker, we often reflect on how far we have come and celebrate our successes.

Jason has become a valuable member of my family, he still sees his birth family regularly as they love him too. We talk about how fortunate he is to be part of two families and have so many extra people in his life who care for him.

"Having an additional child in your family adds so much more to your life that I could not imagine family life without him now. When you know that they feel safe, part of your family and unconditionally loved, it is the best feeling in the world."

Whenever I speak with my social worker, I feel understood and listened to. They see things from my point of view which means I feel so supported.

Sometimes my friends say 'You are so good to be a foster carer' and this always surprises me, because I honestly think that I am so lucky to have been chosen to care for Jason. What an honour it is!



"They really do see things from your point of view which means you feel so supported."



Types of Care

All children and young people are unique, so the care they require is different as well.

Emergency

Sometimes, we need to find a safe place for a child to stay at very short notice. Emergency care can be for a few nights, to a few weeks. Sometimes emergency care is needed in the middle of the night or on weekends.

Short-term or Restoration Care

Short-term care can be anything from a few months to two years. These arrangements are made for children for whom the plan is to return home to their families. Often carers assist the child's family to make the changes they need to be able to safely resume care of their child.

Permanent or Long Term Care

It isn't always possible for children to be returned to their families, so they'll need to stay in care until they reach the age of 18 years. This is the age young people usually

leave care, however, all states now offer the option to remain in care for a few years longer, so that they are mature enough and have the skills and supports required for them to safely live independently.

Children with Disabilities

There are many children and young people with disabilities who need a caring family. This can include children with physical or learning disabilities, sensory needs or a combination of these.

Occasional or Respite Care

Caring does not have to be full-time. Occasional carers look after a child on weekends or for a few days while their regular carer has a break. It can be difficult for a child to go to different people so we try to arrange for the child always to go to the same carer so they can get to know each other.

Why are we called Key Assets Australia?

The name 'Key Assets' reflects our belief that carers are the agents of change for children in their care and, therefore, each of our carers is a 'Key Asset'.

Good carers nurture a child's or young person's strength and resilience to grow. Carers can and do make a positive contribution to supporting children in achieving their potential.

We believe children and young people should have the opportunity to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy life and achieve their goals.

Our logo mirrors our purpose by a structured geometric pattern that repeats and strengthens each time a new piece is added. Each colour and piece represents the diversity of our services as well as the contribution each individual makes.

The "heart shape" of our logo reinforces the message that people are at the very "heart" of what we do and why we exist.

The gap in the heart reminds us that no matter how far we have come there is always more we can do. Key Assets Australia continues to be committed to finding the solution to complete the shape.

Our culture and core values make us Key Assets Australia:

- ▲ Recognising everybody counts and is accountable.
- ▲ Providing high quality and safe services.
- ▲ Achieving excellence through continuous improvement.
- ▲ Cultivation of knowledge, innovation and learning.



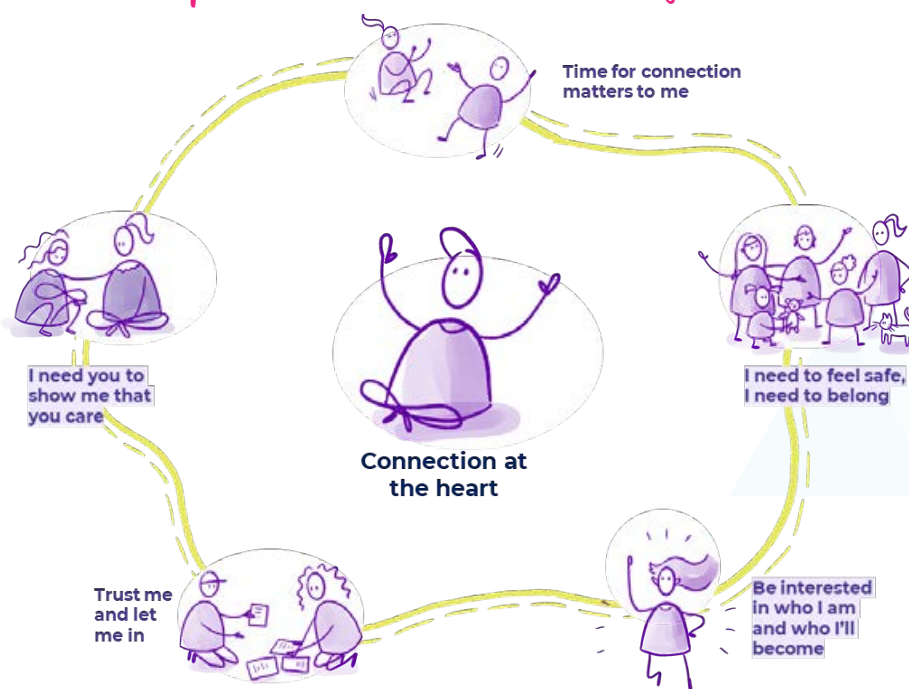
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SERVING CHILDREN, FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES



All children and young people thrive and connect to family, community and culture.

The vision of what matters to young people in care.



STRATEGIC ROADMAP

2025 - 2030

Our plan for the next 5 years, from the perspective of children and young people.





The Key Assets Australia Frameworks

The Framework for Excellence

KAA believes children everywhere deserve excellent care and this framework outlines the overarching aims and outcomes which we hope will be achieved for all children placed in our care. We are committed to working together with our children, our birth families, our fostering families, the Department and other significant partners to strive for excellence, to build resilience and a sense of belonging for all children growing up in foster care.

The Key2Care Practice Framework

KAA introduced the Key2Care Framework to improve the way we work with KAA carers through their fostering journey. The Key2Care Framework will give more structure to the way social workers and carers collaborate to work on things that matter to them and so achieve the best outcomes for their families and the children they care for.

The Key Care Team

A team approach that achieves the best outcomes for children and young people in care. The Key Care Team Model is made up of the necessary and important services and people who work collaboratively to create a nurturing, caring and therapeutic environment to achieve safety, stability and well-being for the child.





Brenden's story

“The connections you build with your kin children and shared experiences throughout your journey together are so rewarding”.

Brenden is a grandfather, caring for two grandchildren called, Ben and Bobbi who came into his care when they were 2 years old. Ben and Bobbie are twins.

When Ben and Bobbie were born Brenden thought their parents would need a lot of support. They were both very young and quite overwhelmed. He was always there to offer what help he could and started to prepare himself for the possibility of caring for the twins full time.

Brenden was approached by Ben and Bobbi's social worker and asked if he would consider caring for the twins. He did not hesitate to take on this opportunity and welcomed his grandson and granddaughter into his home.

Brenden explains “We have lots of family in our local area including my sister and my nieces and nephews as well as their children. My niece's kids are close to my grandchildren's age, so they have a very close bond and love to play together. Over the spring and summer months it becomes very hot so the kids will be in the local pool or my sister's pool anywhere from 8 in the morning. Taking the children

to the park and seeing them interact with their friends or making new friends is a very rewarding experience.”

“I was very fortunate that my family and my employer were happy to help and support in any way. I soon found out that I would need a lot of support both emotionally and practically. Being in a country town, we do not have access to a lot of support services and Key Assets Australia were able to assist in helping us in this journey”.

Brenden recounts “seeing the children come out of their shells and excel in a sporting activity like gymnastics is an incredibly rewarding and enjoyable experience”.

He also shared how his “whole world has changed, taking the kids to their first day of school and supporting them to manage the word of technology is all new to me.”

He loves his new life and believes strongly “My two precious grandchildren deserve a chance in life to become the best version of what they could be.” He sees his role is to be there to support and guide them.



What next?

If you would like to take the next step towards becoming a kinship carer with Key Assets Australia, then contact us at:

Tel: 1800 WE CARE (1800 93 2273)

www.canifoster.com.au

*Scan to
learn more*



If you have any feedback we would love to hear from you:
feedback@keyassets.org.au



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