

Support Information for Kinship and Relative Carers





The kids... they're here!

**These can be exciting, busy
and emotional times...**

After meeting so many amazing Relative and Kinship Carers we have put together some information & support for Relative Carers to give you a bit of a hand. This booklet has been created to help, support and direct you to the appropriate services for your family, to give you some ideas about who to get in touch with to help you and the kids.

Becoming a full time Kinship Carer to children can be very unexpected and overwhelming, and you may feel you have no idea where to start.

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Connection

This is really important as many Carers we have spoken with say they have felt isolated and alone. This is not good for you or for the children you are caring for. Some have also said that they have had a range of feelings such as shame, embarrassment, anger, sadness, relief, pressure... a real see-saw of emotions. Struggling with feelings of grief is a very normal response to the unexpected changes that have happened in your life. All these jumbled feelings are no reflection of the love you have for the children who are now in your care.

There's lots of ways to make connections:

Self Care

When we are taking care of others, we often put ourselves at the bottom of the list. Self care is about making intentional choices to look after yourself:

What actions can you take to care for your physical, mental and emotional health?

Some gardening?

What helps you recharge?

Watching a DVD (uninterrupted!)

What brings you joy?

Doing something crafty and creative?

What activities do you enjoy?

A cuppa with a friend?

Is it a simple walk?

Some other sort of exercise or sport, swimming, tai chi and fishing. tennis?



There are also some phone counselling lines specifically for Kinship and Relative Carers:

Connecting Carers NSW supporting Foster Kinship and Relative Carers
24 hour support line Ph: 1300 794 653

Connecting Carers has a worker for the Hunter and Central Coast region. They hold local training and information sessions and some social activities.

Parent Line NSW - Ph: 1300 1300 52

Support for parents and carers of children and children with a disability. Information, support, referral and counselling about anything to do with parenting.

Interrelate - Ph: 1300 736 966 or 4016 0550

Free specialised counselling for carers - call to find out if your family is eligible.

Samaritans Kinship Caseworker - Ph: 1300 656 336 or 0429 066 315

Support with information and advice, short - term casework and referrals.

Support



Speak with your Doctor about:

Better Access Scheme, also called a Mental Health Treatment Plan. Through Medicare you are eligible for up to ten individual and ten group (so it could be with your partner or with the whole family if required) mental health services per calendar year.

Hunter Family Referral Service (FRS) - Ph: 1300 006 480

**Child Protection Helpline
(24hrs 7days a week) - Ph: 132 111**

Money Matters

FAMILY and COMMUNITY Services (FACS)

Child Protection Helpline (24hrs 7days a week) - Ph 132 111

Supported Care Allowance

The Supported Care Allowance is assessed by FACS and is financial assistance that can be paid by NSW Community Services to a range of people, including grandparents and other relatives or kin, who are looking after a child or young person who is not living with their parents.

Speak with your FACS worker and they will be able to assist you with information and support contacts.

Centrelink

As a Kinship carer of a child who is your relative you may be eligible for various Centrelink payments. What you qualify for will be dependent on your individual circumstances. You may be able to be assisted with child care costs, educational expenses and general cost of living to support your family.

The best thing to do to get the right information is to contact a Centrelink Grandparents Adviser Ph: 1800 245 965. (Free call)

Emergency Relief & financial support services

Emergency Relief support may be assistance with food, bills, clothing etc.

Samaritans Emergency Relief Centres are located at:

Broadmeadow - Ph: 4922 1540

Taree - Ph: 6551 0945

Teralba - Ph: 4958 9777

Gorokan - Ph: 4393 2450

Morriset - Ph: 4973 1204

Toukley - Ph: 0418 345 623

Cessnock - Ph: 4993 3400

Wyoming - Ph: 4329 3052

East Maitland - Ph: 0407 781 515

Toronto - Ph: 4959 7857

Rutherford - Drop in Thursday Anglican Church, 92 Gillies St Rutherford

Singleton Neighbourhood Centre
Ph: 6571 2499

**Raymond Terrace Neighbourhood
Centre - Ph: 4987 1311**

Maitland Neighbourhood Centre
Ph: 4932 0950

Maitland St Vincent de Paul
Ph: 4933 6828

Dungog Neighbourhood Centre
Ph: 4992 1133

**Gloucester Buckets way
Neighbourhood Group**
Ph: 6558 2452

Financial Counselling Services
can help with budgeting, debt,
advocacy and advice.

To find a Financial Counsellor for
free and confidential advice and
assistance **Ph: 1800 007 007**



Health & Wellbeing



**There are many specialised services within the Public Health system.
To make an enquiry call:**

Hunter Health Link - Ph: 1800 063 635
(24-hour service for all Hunter Health Services)

Mental Health Line - Ph: 1800 011 511 for information and referral

NDIS

**Assistance if you are caring for a child with a disability.
NDIS is the National Disability Insurance Scheme.**

NDIA - Ph: 1800 800 110 or visit www.ndis.org.au

**If you are interested in learning more about the NDIS and are not sure
where to begin, Samaritans is a good place to start.
Ph:1300 656 336 for FREE information and advice.**



Documentation



Documentation and Proof of Identity are important for things like enrolling a child into school or childcare, accessing medical and dental treatment, overseas travel etc.

Important documents are birth certificates, Medicare cards, health care cards, FACS confirmation of placement paperwork, legal papers, such as contact orders etc. School reports, medical and dental records and baby health records may also be useful.

If the child you are caring for is involved with FACS, your caseworker will be able to assist with obtaining documentation.

Some carers have suggested it is really important to keep a diary.

They have said it helps them keep an accurate record of events. Keeping a documented record may be useful for legal reasons.

Some aspects of your diary may even be used if you do “Life Story” work with the children in your care.

Your FACS worker will supply you with a Life Story workbook.

This can be a really special way to record memories and details of the life of the child in your care, to tell their story, through words and pictures.

Your diary might contain the details on how you came to be the primary carer of the child in your care or events leading up to this happening.

Maintain the diary by jotting down:

- Day-to-day incidents about the child in your care. Think about how things are with this new situation including financial and legal aspects, as well as your health and well-being.
- Any incidents involving interaction between you, the child in your care and the child’s parents. Make sure you include dates, times and locations.

Legal Business



A lot of Carers have said they hadn't had much to do with courts or legal matters before. So they have been overwhelmed and sometimes confused by the processes.

Family Law Hotline - Ph: 1800 050 321

A free national phone line. They do not provide specific legal advice for your individual circumstances. The way they assist is to provide help with general information and let you know who you need to call for assistance.

Hunter Community Legal Centre - Ph: 4040 9123

The Hunter Community Legal Centre provides free legal advice to people who live, work and study in the Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Great Lakes and Hunter Valley regions.

For legal advice and information- Ph: 40409120 or 1800 650 073

Advice can be given over the phone, face-to-face and they also see people at Outreach locations, as well as Family Law Advice through their Family Law Programs.

Aboriginal Legal Service Newcastle - Ph: 4926 1571

Legal Aid NSW - Ph: 49295482

Legal Aid have outreach services in different locations such as,

Samaritans Broadmeadow Ph: 4922 1500.

Contact Legal Aid for outreach information.

The Mirabel Foundation has an excellent booklet called “*When the Children Arrive...*” It has lots of useful information and has a section about legal matters.

You can get a copy of the book and information about Mirabel by contacting:

Ph: (03) 95279422

E: mirabel@mirabelfoundation.org.au

W: www.mirabelfoundation.org.au

Knowledge about who we are and where we come from is vital to anyone and particularly for children as they grow and develop.

A strong and balanced sense of identity can help a child to feel secure and have a positive self-image.

There is a great booklet produced by Connecting Carers NSW called ***“Understanding Contact”***. To obtain a copy **Ph: 1300 794 653**

They also have a short clip on their website called Understanding Contact go to: **www.connectingcarersnsw.com.au**

Education & Childcare

It makes sense to maintain a child’s current placement at the school or preschool they are already attending for continuity and connection. This is not always possible for various reasons.

If you need to enrol them elsewhere, organise to meet with the Principal of the school or Coordinator of the centre. Explain your family’s current circumstances. You may feel uncomfortable doing this, but it is important they are aware, so they can best support you and your child. Staff will help them settle into their new community as you all make this transition.

Many of the topics in this booklet are covered in the publication, “***Caring for Kids: A guide for Foster, Relative and Kinship Carers***” produced by Family & Community Services (FACS) NSW.

Other useful resources are:

Hunter Central Coast Service Directory for Foster, Relative and Kin Carers

www.raisingchildren.net.au (information for Grandparent and Kinship Carers)

For further information about Samaritans or to download a copy of this resource please go to: www.samaritans.org.au/publications

Child Protection Helpline - Ph: 132 111 (24hrs 7days a week)

The content of this booklet is general advice.

For specific information and guidance relating to your families individual circumstances we recommend that you speak directly with your case worker and agency.



Samaritans

Compassion Integrity Justice

For a copy of this booklet or more information contact:

Ph: 1300 656 336 Email: mail@samaritans.org.au

Web: www.samaritans.org.au/publications

Funded by:



Australian Government

Department of Social Services