



**Government
of South Australia**
Office of the Guardian
for Children and
Young People

What makes a good foster carer?

The Office of the Guardian's Youth Advisors were asked by Families SA for their opinions about good foster carers as part of the Review of Foster Care Assessment and Training late in 2008. This is some of what they had to say.

They told Families SA that children or young people in care want stability and security through consistent care and a daily routine. They want to be listened to sympathetically and involved in decision making.

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...carers should know about the importance of involving children and young people in decision-making about their lives.

...but not always involved in all of the detail.

There's some things that a child doesn't need to be involved in, for example an argument between a social worker and carer about clothing allowance or arguments between lawyers.

Practical stuff was important like access to medical care - but also fun.

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Some foster parents include you in all their family stuff, especially the fun stuff, but some foster parents don't.

Young people in care need to feel that it's not being done just for the money.

Carers, the Youth Advisors thought, need to have a knowledge of child development and safe caring practices and to understand trauma, attachment and mental health issues that might arise for children in care. They need to know how to support and maintain cultural ties.

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A carer should be prepared to learn about the child's culture in order to support that child's connection with their culture and heritage.

Family based carers should be happy and stable and welcome the child into their home.

The focus for someone considering becoming a carer should be on wanting to provide a home and a heart for a child who can't live with their family.

They should have good parenting skills, including being compassionate and being focussed on the child, and be willing to help children with their education and life skills.

A carer should enable the child or young person to continue with activities that they were doing before coming into care that were positive and contribute to their development, for example, family birthday and cultural celebrations.

For young people interviewed by CREATE, a good foster care placement involved:



- constant review of [the] placement
- equality - welcoming, respect and courtesy
- stability
- a family environment
- open communication
- support with life skills, practical things and emotionally
- [being] encouraged to be yourself
- access to your birth family
- staying with the foster carer after they turn 18.

More about the Office of the Guardian

The Guardian's [Youth Advisors](#) are young people in care, or who have recently been in care, who volunteer their experience and skills to help the Office.

Information about the Office and its functions, as well as a wealth of facts, reports and opinions about issues for young people in care, are available from www.gcyp.sa.gov.au.

You can contact the Office by telephone on 8226 8570 or email us at gcyp@gcyp.sa.gov.au .