



FACT SHEET – for Peak Bodies and Service Providers

Transition of Family Based Care

What is the Family Based Care Services Investment Specification?

The Family Based Care Services Investment Specification is one of the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety's (the department) funding documents which underpin the business relationship between the department and the funding recipient.

The new Family Based Care Services Investment Specification supports the establishment of individual programs for foster care and kinship care and will include a base-and-brokerage funding model.

What changes are being introduced?

At present, a Queensland Government-led initiative is to transition family-based care to new service types over the next three years. Partnering with existing and new foster and kinship care agencies, we will change the way that support is funded and increase opportunities to support carers in different ways. There will be an increased focus on flexible financial and practical supports to reflect the needs of individual carer households.

Six new service types have been introduced as part of this specification to better:

- support the activities of finding and assessing foster and kinship carers
- respond to the changing needs of carer households; and
- support the costs of delivering care.

What are the service types?

The six new service types are:

1. **Connecting Kin (T210)**
2. **Equipping Kin (T211)**
3. **Supporting Kin (T212)**
4. **Foster Care Recruitment (T213)**
5. **Supporting Foster Care (T214)**
6. **Specialist Family Based Care (T215)**

The sixth service type is included to help explore professional models of family-based care (not subject to this process and will commence as part of the Queensland Government's \$27 million commitment to pilot professional foster care).

Detailed descriptions of these service types and program logics can be found in the Family Based Care Services Investment Specification at <https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/media/documents/about-us/funding-grants/specifications/fam-based-care-invest-spec.pdf>.

How was the Family Based Care Services Investment Specification created?

The Family Based Care Services Investment Specification was created following a three-year research project between the Queensland Government and the Community Services Industry Alliance (CSIA).

This project engaged with the sector to investigate the relationship between investment and outcomes for children and young people in the Intensive Foster Care program stream, particularly in the context of rising placement demand and increasing complexity in support needs.

The project was completed in 4 phases from 2019 to 2022 and identified the need for a program that allowed supports to be individualised to carer households, resulting in the CSIA recommendation of a Tailored Support Program (TSP) model. The TSP model incorporates a 'base' cost for care arrangement services plus a 'brokerage' amount able to be used across any service's pool of carers and prospective carers.

In addition to the TSP model, the project also highlighted the need for increased support required for new carers, including through assessment processes. With this in mind, these new service types are designed to support all family-based care arrangements, including new carers.

What are the reasons for the new service types within the new investment specification?

For **carers and the sector**, the main reasons for creating the new service types are to:

1. improve carer recruitment by targeting and coordinating investment
2. support carer retention rates by providing improved access to support options through the inclusion of a brokerage amount
3. create greater flexibility in how services are delivered, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations and Indigenous Businesses that may wish to provide some, but not all, functions to meet the needs of their communities (for example, by providing services that link and support kin only); and
4. address issues with existing service models that are contributing to the increasing number of children and young people in residential care.

For the **department**, the new service types will allow us to:

1. adjust what we buy in response to demand across recruitment, assessment and carer support
2. measure the outcomes we are seeking to change, for example care recruitment and retention rates; and
3. be better placed to meet targets, including increasing the percentage of children cared for by family members (kin); reducing the percentage of children in residential care; and transitioning service delivery and funds to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations and Indigenous Businesses.

When will the new service types be in use?

Kinship care service types are already being used in market testing and early adopter sites, which commenced in July 2023 and were expanded in 2024. More than 63 per cent of kin care service types are being delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations and Indigenous Businesses. Market testing will continue with other new services in 2024–25.

From 1 July 2025, and over the next three financial years, both the Child Protection (placement services) and Family Based Care Services Investment Specification will operate concurrently with regions working to fully transition all family-based care services to the new specification by 30 June 2028.

What is the process of transition to the new service types?

The transition to the new service types will be adaptable to local needs and conditions and will occur over three phases beginning in 2025, noting that marketing testing and early adopter services have already commenced.

The three phases will support a staged approach and allow for sector readiness, and learnings to revise and enhance transition planning.

- **Phase 1 (Market Sounding EOI):** Market sounding work, aimed at gathering market interest and coverage prior to finalising transition plans will occur early in 2025 with a statewide EOI process. Market interest across the 5 service types will be mapped, identifying where there are healthy markets and where additional work may be required for limited markets.

- **Phase 2 (Program Level):** Realignment of new and existing service providers to deliver the new Family Based Care service types, focusing on increasing carer numbers. This phase will focus on implementing region-wide Foster Care Recruitment service/s (T213) and establishing kinship services as a different function under a new kinship care program (T210, T211 and T212) with initial focus on increasing investment and coverage to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations and Indigenous Businesses.
- **Phase 3 (System Level):** Transition across multiple providers in a region or district to establish separate foster and kinship programs including Supporting Kin services (T212) to match supply mix targets and new Supporting Foster Care services (T214).

What are the timeframes for the transition phases?

Phase one will commence in early 2025 with an initial EOI remaining open for an eight-week period. The outcome of the EOI process will inform the development of place-based, Regional Investment Plans that will be following a statewide framework of transition. Phase 2 will commence from 1 July 2025, signalling the commencement of procurement activities and the transition of investment to the new FBC Investment Specification. The completion of phase 2 and start of phase 3 will be timed to local market readiness and regional capacity to support procurement and commissioning activity. The transition of contracts will conclude by 30 June 2028, followed by a further 2 years of evaluation.

Options to consider specialist family-based care (T215) will occur outside the above phased approach and will commence in 2025–26 as part of the Queensland Government’s commitment to pilot professional foster care. This will be used to support specific cohorts of carers and models of service delivery focused on professional family-based care to provide an alternative to residential care.

Will Intensive Foster Care or High Plus places be impacted by the transition?

Intensive Foster Care and High Plus services will be phased out over the course of the transition and replaced with the new base-and-brokerage model for all foster and kinship carers. Some services may be extended to align contract renewal dates with regional planned phased changes.

If it is found that there is still a small number of placements where individual needs of a child or young person are unable to be met by the above process, then other ways of providing support will be explored.

What are the principles supporting the transition?

The principles guiding the transition to the new service models are:

- **Children and young people are at the centre of decision making:** all actions will ensure a better care system for children and young people.
- **Support to carers:** no carer will be worse off in the support they can access. More supports will be available to more carers. Services will keep foster and kinship carers engaged to ensure stable and appropriate care options for children through services tailored to the needs of carer households.
- **Service continuity:** minimise disruption to services for current carers and children during transition.
- **Pace and timeliness:** the transition must consider markets, demand, growth and culture.
- **Increased visibility and accountability:** the transition supports a new family-based care system where deliverables are achieved.
- **Effective communication:** enhance collaboration with current and potential providers and service users through clear communication, promoting co-design and market readiness.

How will the transition be monitored?

A Family Based Care Strategic Implementation Group (SIG) will monitor the transition. This group will be convened following Phase 1: market engagement (expression of interest).

The department will extend an invitation for membership of this group to peak bodies and all providers who responded to the expression of interest and/or who hold service delivery responsibility for any foster and kinship care service. The SIG will support effective transition and provide a forum for issues to be raised, resolutions tracked, and for progress and other information to be shared.

How will the transition be evaluated?

The transition is being evaluated through kin market testing, which continues until 30 June 2025. This evaluation focusses on the increased use of kin, including increased supports. In addition, scoping for further evaluation of the new Family Based Care Services Investment Specification is underway. Evaluation of the transition will continue subject to the timing of phases.

Other important reforms improving outcomes for children and carers

In addition to the Family Based Care Services Investment Specification, the Queensland Government is also:

- investing an additional \$190.8 million over 4 years to ensure that care allowance payments reflect the needs of family-based care arrangements
- providing a \$1500 contribution to children in all care arrangements for extracurricular activities; and
- investing \$27million to pilot new professional foster care models.

For more information

Website

For information about foster and kinship care: <https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/our-work/child-safety/foster-kinship-care>

For details about the Family Based Care Services Investment Specification: https://www.dcssds.qld.gov.au/_media/documents/about-us/funding-grants/specifications/fam-based-care-invest-spec.pdf

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