



Newsletter | October 2018

**My Forever
Family NSW**

Welcome to our first edition of the My Forever Family NSW Members' Newsletter. Our aim is to support carers who share their lives and homes with children across NSW.

We've had an active few months starting the program, and we look forward to sharing with you information and developments over the coming months.

In this month's edition we will share with you the work we are doing in engaging new carers through campaigns; continuing education for carers; support; and advocacy – being a voice for carers and the children in their care.

We are very excited to let you know, that as our carers, you have the opportunity to sign up to our Member Rewards program, where you can save money on everyday items such as groceries, fuel, movie tickets, and over 1000 store outlets in NSW alone.

You'll also note we are running a competition to recognise the valuable work of a nominated carer who will win two free tickets to the **Adopt Change | A Home for Every Child Gala** in Sydney.

We're always keen to hear from you. Send through any stories, questions and/or feedback to our team anytime.

Thank you for being part of **My Forever Family NSW**, we hope you find the service of great value to you in your carer journey or in supporting those around you who are carers.

Renée Carter

CEO, Adopt Change

** Adopt Change operates the My Forever Family NSW program.*

OUR MEMBERS

Access to free Loyalty Rewards to major retailers

Being a My Forever Family NSW Member has its rewards!

Registered Carer Membership is for registered foster and kinship carers, guardians and people who have adopted a child from out-of-home care in NSW.

Registered Carer membership benefits include:

- Free attendance at most My Forever Family and partner events
- Access to advocacy, support and information
- Caring for those who care for kids: My Forever Family will offer discounts at major retailers as part of our registered carers members-only loyalty program* You can look forward to discounts at supermarkets, fuel, cinemas, clothing stores, etc. Over 1000 outlets across NSW!

You can join the My Forever Family member community by visiting the **Membership section** on the website .

** Members' approved carer status will be verified to access loyalty rewards*

Join today!

TELL US YOUR STORY!

We'd love to hear from you. Tell us about your experience as a foster or kinship carer, guardian or adoptive parent.

We are looking for real stories from all types of carers to inspire others to open their homes and their hearts to a child.

All stories will protect your identity and that of the child/children mentioned.

Please send your story (up to 300 words) via **email: evelyn.santoro@myforeverfamily.org.au**

PSYCHOLOGY FEATURE: IT TAKES MORE THAN LOVE

Carers often feel that the children they are caring for are not grateful for everything they do for them. Carers go into this with so much love to give, and it is confronting when they realise love alone is not enough.

It's hard to understand that these kids are often just trying to deal with a fundamental view of themselves as bad and unlovable.

No amount of food, shelter, clothes, toys, and activities is going to change that anytime soon. In fact, giving too much can be overwhelming for children who have come from very little, and believe they are unworthy.

As children, we think the world is all about us, and everything that happens in our world is because of us. Mum loses her temper because we've spilled the milk, we think 'I'm bad'. We don't think, "oh dear mum must have had a stressful day at work".

For most of us, these moments are buffered by safety and nurturing. For kids who have experienced abuse and neglect, there is no buffer.

To survive they have learned to control everyone they can (if I can control those around me I just might reduce the chance of being hurt) and to make themselves unlikable (if I can keep everyone at a distance, I might not get hurt).

It's understandable to respond to controlling behaviour by becoming more controlling and rejecting behaviour by rejecting back. A good carer can accept they are going to feel this way, and often will need an outlet or help to manage their own feelings, but they will not parent from those feelings.

Help kids understand their own feelings and behaviour from a framework of "Good job! You did the best you could to survive".

Naomi Illiffe is a psychologist and provides counselling to children, adolescents and adults with particular expertise in supporting those who have been touched by trauma.

Read more about Naomi on Naomi's [website](http://www.naomi-illiffe.com.au/).
www.naomi-illiffe.com.au/



GUARDIANSHIP TRAINING

Register for one of our 'Guardianship' information sessions during November.

The information will help you understand more about guardianship and if it's the right option for you and your family. Each session includes information about how to apply, what the assessment involves, and what happens after guardianship orders are made.

Check our [website](#) for dates for this and other training or [Contact us](#) to find out about becoming a guardian.

A HOME FOR ZOE

My foster daughter Zoe came to live with me almost a year after I made my decision to become a foster carer.

Being single, with no kids of my own, I was worried about how I would cope, but my family and close friends were ready to help so I decided to apply, and threw myself into the training, preparations and parenting courses.

I thought I couldn't possibly be any more ready, but when I finally met Zoe I felt stunned. Was I really being handed this precious little human to care for? Could I really do it?

She was so tiny - a frightened four-year-old trying to put on a brave face. On her first day in my home, she cleaned her bedroom from top to bottom with a packet of baby wipes to try and please me.

Once she started to trust me a little, I persuaded her that it was my job to clean the house, and her job to play. But even play was not easy for her. Zoe needed to be with me and have my full attention all the time. It was an intense time and I would have struggled without my family and close friends. Their support meant I could have regular breaks and Zoe began to learn that she could trust other adults as well.

It took many months, but gradually she began to understand that I wasn't going to leave her. I remember vividly the joy I felt the first time she relaxed enough to become caught up in her own imaginary play without needing me by her side.

Now Zoe is ten. She is a bit too comfortable about not cleaning the house and is starting to go on sleepovers at friends' houses. We still have our challenges, but looking back I am amazed at how far we've come. Allowing her into my life is, without doubt, the best thing I have ever done.



Be there in that moment

Every day, there are children in NSW needing someone like you.

SPREAD THE WORD

Our campaign update

Jumping from Sky News to the Network 10 studios and then Seven News – the interviews didn't stop during Foster Care Week.

My Forever Family NSW launched two campaigns during September and October, which garnered much attention in the Foster Care space. It was a great opportunity to share knowledge and educate the public on some very real figures.

There are over 18,000 children and young people in out of home care (in NSW alone). We were able to showcase the different types of care available (respite, emergency, kinship, etc) and explain a little more around current needs and how people can get involved.

Our first ever ad went live in October, taken up by Nine Network, NITV, Foxtel and all social media platforms. With Facebook alone, we were able to have over 220,000 people interacting with our content – and prompted hundreds of enquiries.

The most effective way to bring attention to care needs is word of mouth. If you'd like to share any of our content amongst your networks, please do so. If you haven't seen the Foster Care ad and social media snippets, have a look on our YouTube **channel**.

FAQs

How do I become a guardian?



We have lots of questions from foster and kinship carers asking what guardianship is, and how they can apply to become the legal guardian of their kids.

Guardianship is a good permanency option, particularly those children who are being cared for by relatives. It doesn't change the legal relationship that a child has with their parents, but it still gives a child a permanent home until they are 18 years old.

As a guardian you will have a full parental responsibility, and will not have any case management. You will be responsible for following the care plan or court orders made for your kids, including arranging for them to see or stay in touch with their birth family. If supervision is required during contact visits then as the guardian you'll also be the one to do that.

If that sounds a bit daunting – remember you won't be completely on your own!

You will still receive an allowance to help provide for the children. **My Forever Family NSW** offers ongoing training and support to guardians and can also connect you with other families like yours.

If you are already a carer or kinship carer then you can speak with your case manager to discuss becoming your child's guardian.

You can also contact **My Forever Family NSW** to discuss your situation, what guardianship would mean for you and your kids, and how to get started.

Find out more on the [website](#).

CARER 
SUPPORT LINE
1300 782 975
Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm

CARER 
SUPPORT
enquiries@myforeverfamily.org.au
myforeverfamily.org.au



My Forever Family NSW

The My Forever Family NSW newsletter is produced by the Communications team.

Disclaimer: The information and advice provided in this document/website is general information. It may not apply to a particular case, and as such, must not be taken as legal advice.