

# Care and carer support agency annual reporting under the *Carers Recognition Regulation 2021*

## Reporting template – ACT Together 2023-24

Annual reporting obligation	Supporting evidence/examples
<b>Section 4(a)-(b) – raising awareness about and promoting the care relationship principles</b>	
<p>A care and carer support agency must report on:</p>	<p>ACT Together has reviewed the <i>Statement of Commitment between ACT Together and our foster and kinship carers</i> and updated it to include the care relationship principles.</p>
<p>a) The measures the agency has taken to promote the care relationship principles to:</p>	<p>Policies, procedures, and guides under development or review are considered with the care relationship principles in mind. One example is the Decision Making Framework was reviewed and updated in 2023.</p>
<p>i. people in a care relationship who are receiving support services from the agency in relation to the care relationship</p> <p>ii. the wider community.</p>	<p>The <i>Carers Recognition Act</i> (the Act) was discussed in the Carer Wellbeing Joint Committee in 2023-24. Information about the Act has been included in carer newsletters.</p>
<p>b) The measures the agency has taken to ensure the following people are aware of and understand the care relationship principles:</p>	<p>ACT Together has comprehensive guidelines for working with staff who are also foster or kinship carers. This information is hosted on the ACT Together Hub. Staff are reminded every 3 to 6 months to review these guidelines.</p>
<p>i. the agency’s employees and agents</p> <p>ii. people in a care relationship who are receiving support services from the agency in relation to the care relationship.</p>	<p>For staff that have other caring responsibilities, each agency within the ACT Together consortium has policy and enterprise agreements to support staff applying for flexible work arrangements and other assistance. These are managed on a case by case basis.</p>
	<p>In 2023-24 ACT Together conducted staff awareness of the care relationship principles via face to face and electronic information modalities. This occurred via email and in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) meetings via the Service Improvement Team and the Carer Support Program Manager.</p>

A flyer was developed to inform carers of the principles and this information was placed on the ACT Together website and in the ACT Together foyer.

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### Section 4(c) – upholding the care relationship principles

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Care and carer support agencies must report on:

- c) the measures the agency has taken, as well as their employees and agents, to uphold the care relationship principles in assessing, planning, delivering, managing or reviewing support services, programs and policies in relation to people in care relationships.

ACT Together undertakes a range of activities which uphold the care relationship principles including:

- Guidelines for case managers on working effectively with carers and working with staff who are carers.
- A unique, dedicated carer support team for foster and kinship carers.
- Tailored support packages offered as needed and within resource constraints e.g. vouchers, counselling etc.
- Culturally appropriate support services
- LGBTQI+ carers represented at panels/events
- Training calendar for staff and carers
- Carer representation on various panels such as Carer Assessment and Linking Panel and Cultural Panel
- Foster care week acknowledgement and thank you event, Mother's and Father's day gifts

In 2023-24, the ACT Together communication procedure was launched to further enhance all workers' ability to engage with carers and support the care relationship principles.

ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies, alongside Curijo conducted a study for the ACT Community Services Directorate to better understand the needs of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal kinship carers within the ACT. ACT Together actively engaged in and supported this research. At its completion ACT Together undertook a pilot of one of the developed tools, a Kinship Carer Support Plan, during this reporting period.

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## Section 4(d) – consulting with carers

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Care and carer support agencies must provide:

- d) a summary of any consultation the agency has undertaken with carers receiving support services from the agency, or entities representing carers, when planning or reviewing support services and programs in relation to people in care relationships provided by the agency.

ACT Together, staff and managers keep records throughout the year of consultations, meetings, planning, decisions and reviews.

Annual household reviews collect information from carers which help to inform how ACT Together is upholding the care relationship principles. During this reporting period, several practice changes were made as a result of feedback, such as the provision of events and training on weekends and the introduction of 2 new sections in carer newsletter – an Aboriginal-focussed section and Carer Contribution.

Carers have been offered consultation and communication around the tender application and transition process to a new service system for OOHC.

ACT Together provides information and resources to carers via monthly carer newsletters.

ACT Together meet regularly with Carers ACT and CYPs which allows for a consistent approach across agencies with input from the voices of carers.

Carer feedback and input has been obtained through polls within the carer newsletter gauging carer experience with ACT Together. This information can then be used to arrange further consultation regarding new policy development, for example the use of cameras and recording devices and apps in carer homes.

### Service Feedback

ACT Together welcomes compliments, comments or complaints from carers as this feedback provides valuable and direct feedback on the quality and performance of services and organisational support functions.

All carers within ACT Together are given access to and information about how to provide feedback at the time of application and within the Carer Handbook.

Service feedback information is also provided on the Website and in our public areas on site. Carers are also directly asked on an annual basis if they wish to provide feedback through the annual review process.

All feedback provided by carers in the form of compliment, comment or complaint is investigated as required, responded to, reported on and provided to operational leaders and Executives to inform practice

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development and organisational change. Reports are provided to operational leaders on a quarterly basis and to Executive on a six-monthly basis.

ACT Together meet regularly with CSD Complaints team to identify and manage systemic issues across organisations.

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#### **Section 4(e) – human resources policy development**

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Care and carer support agencies must provide:

- e) a statement about how the agency has incorporated the care relationship principles in its internal human resources policies in relation to employees who are carers.

ACT Together consortium member agencies have policies in place around significant life events and flexible work policies.

Additionally, Barnardos' Respectful Workplace Policy, revised and updated in September 2023 specifies that having carer's responsibilities is a prescribed attribute that is protected under law.

ACT Together has a proven track record of meeting carer and staff needs with effective communication, flexible arrangements and the ability to implement responses such as setting up a vaccination centre to guarantee access to vaccines for our carers and our children.

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