



Establishment Payment for relatives to support an informal arrangement

There are a number of reasons that grandparents and other relatives assume the care of children within their family. Parents and their families have primary responsibility to provide safe care for children. The Department of Communities (the Department) is not usually involved in situations where families make their own care arrangements for their children.

If the Department is involved with a family due to concerns for a child's safety and wellbeing, child protection staff undertake a child safety investigation to assess if the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to, whether the child's parents are protective, and if a safety plan is required. The Department's preferred way to safeguard and promote a child's safety and wellbeing is to support the child's parents, family and community in the care of the child.

In some cases when the Department is undertaking a child safety investigation, a child's family members may decide that it is in the child's best interests for them to live with their grandparents or other relatives. This change in circumstances for the child will be considered by Department staff when completing the child safety investigation and safety plan for the child.

The child's parents need to agree with the informal care arrangement as parental responsibility will remain with them. In this instance, the grandparent or other relative may be eligible for a once off Establishment Payment from the Department.

What is an Establishment Payment?

The Department introduced the Establishment Payment in recognition of the initial costs involved when a child goes to live with their grandparents or other relatives under this type of informal arrangement. It is a once off payment of \$1000 per child to assist with the costs of setting up the new accommodation arrangements for the child such as bedroom furniture, bedding, and age appropriate toys and equipment.

Once it's agreed that the child will live with you, the Establishment Payment will be paid (usually to your bank account). The payment is made for each child you take into your care under the informal arrangement. The payment won't affect your Centrelink entitlements.

You'll only receive the payment for a child once. If, for example, the child goes back to live with their parents and then for some reason they return to your care, an Establishment Payment will not be paid again.

What is a safety plan?

A safety plan is a written agreement based on the safety goals developed with the child's parents, family members, safety network and the Department that sets out how any foreseeable risk or threats to the child's safety and wellbeing will be managed. This plan will relate directly to the concerns for the child's safety and wellbeing that were being assessed by the Department during the child safety investigation.

The Department arranges a Signs of Safety meeting with you and the child's parents (and any other important people) to develop the safety plan.



Things to consider

It's important to consider all the issues you may face when taking on the full-time care of a child. This might include:

- Can your house accommodate a larger family?
- Will your health allow you to cope with the rigours and demands of caring for a child?
- The challenges associated where a child has challenging behaviours or disability.
- Any disruption to other family members in the household.
- Will you (or your spouse) need to cut down or leave your paid work to provide care for the child?
- The costs involved.

Local services and support

Bringing up children is challenging. You may find that your life and plans for the future change when you take on the care of a child. The child will also have some adjusting to do as they get used to your way of doing things, your routines and your rules. You may benefit from connecting to local services, support agencies and organisations such as:

- playgroups and child care centres;
- community centres;
- carer associations and support groups;
- education and training services; or
- counselling services.

The Department can provide information on these services.

The booklet *Grandfamilies: A Resource Guide for Western Australian Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* is an easy to read, practical guide that includes telephone numbers and websites of relevant government and non-government agencies and support groups. The booklet is available online using the following link –

<https://www.dlhc.wa.gov.au/Publications/Pages/Grandfamilies-Guide.aspx>.

Australian Government benefits and assistance

You may be eligible for Family Assistance payments and other support payments and allowances from the Australian Government to help with the cost of raising a child in your care. Full information on benefits and assistance can be found on the Department of Human Services (DHS) website - www.humanservices.gov.au.

You will need to contact DHS to discuss your personal circumstances and test your eligibility for assistance. Contact DHS on 132 468 or visit your local DHS office. For language assistance, you can telephone 131 202.



Useful contacts

Department of Human Services (DHS) – Grandparent Advisers

Grandparent Advisers can provide information and support to grandparents and other non-parent carers that have full-time caring responsibility for children.

You can call the Grandparent Adviser Line on 1800 245 965. This is a free call from your home phone.

Ngala Parenting Line

Ngala delivers a statewide Parenting Line that offers support to families with children up to 18 years of age. The Parenting Line operates seven days a week from 8am to 8pm. Calls for children aged 8 to 18 are responded to Monday to Friday.

Call 9368 9368 or 1800 111 546 for country callers. You can request a call online by visiting their website at www.ngala.com.au/helpline.

Wanslea Family Services

Wanslea provides a range of services for families, including grandparent carers. Services include family day care, outside school hours care, vacation care and the Grandcare Program, which provides services for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren full-time on an informal basis. This program includes financial support through the Grandcarers Support Scheme.

See their website for full details www.wanslea.asn.au or call 9245 2441. For financial support through the Grandcarers Support Scheme, call 1800 794 909. For other Grandcare enquires, call 1800 008 323.

Centrecare

Centrecare provides specialist social services throughout the Perth metropolitan area and Goldfields, Esperance and South West regions of Western Australia. These include family and relationship counselling, individual counselling and family dispute resolution services. Some other areas of service provided by Centrecare include financial advice, youth and family support, and accommodation and support.

For enquiries about their services, contact Centrecare's Perth Head Office on 9325 6644 or email enquiries@centrecare.com.au

Anglicare WA

Anglicare WA assists people with relationship issues, financial problems, and housing difficulties. For details on services, you can visit their website at www.anglicarewa.org.au. If you need to contact, call 1300 11 44 46 or email info@anglicarewa.org.au.

Health advice

Healthdirect is a government funded service that provides 24 hour health advice and information, including a link to help find a health service near you. Call healthdirect on 1800 022 222 or visit their website at www.healthdirect.gov.au.

Communities

Your local district office can provide information about a range of family support services. You can call 9222 2555 or 1800 622 258 (in regional areas) for the contact details of the local office or visit our website at www.communities.wa.gov.au.