Foster and kinship care is the preferred choice for caring for children who are unable to live with their own families. General or intensive foster and kinship care arrangements, however, are often unable to meet the needs of children and young people who have complex and extreme emotional and behavioural issues.

Specialist family-based care, sometimes referred to as professional care, is relatively new in Australia and offers an alternative placement option to residential care.

It aims to help children who have experienced, or are impacted by trauma, by providing therapeutic or specialist support within a family environment.

Specialist family-based care allows these children and young people to have stable placements, receive the right care and support to achieve better life outcomes, and be returned to long-term family-based care or reunified with their families.

**Will specialist family-based care be implemented in Queensland?**

Specialist family-based care is being trialed and implemented in other jurisdictions in Australia, and overseas including New Zealand, the United States and United Kingdom.

*Treatment Foster Care Oregon* is one example of an evidence-based model currently being trialed in Victoria.

As part of our out-of-home care reform program, we’re now ready to test the market for expanding family-based care options in Queensland. This will include trialing a specialist foster care model and expanding family-based care services.

**How are specialist carers different to foster carers?**

Specialist carers will not replace the important role played by Queensland’s foster and kinship carers.

Children who require out-of-home care need a stable family environment and a place where they belong. Our foster and kinship carers are integral to caring for these children, helping them build positive relationships and achieve better outcomes.

There are some children, however, who need an extra level of support and these specialist carers will help fill this gap. With their specialised skills and training, they can care for and support children who have experienced, or are impacted by, trauma.

**Would specialist family-based care meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?**

Specialist family-based care aims to respond to children’s individual support needs. This includes culture and connection to family and community.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are disproportionately represented in the tertiary system, and are a major focus in our child and family reform program.

We will ensure specialist family-based care is responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and communities.

**How will it be implemented in Queensland?**

We’re aiming to have the procurement process for specialist family-based care completed, and service providers and care arrangements finalised before the end of the year. Children under 12 years old and currently living in residential care would participate in the trial.

The trial is initially planned for the South West region. This will allow us to review, evaluate and modify, if necessary, to ensure we’re meeting the needs of children, family and community.

We’re also introducing new standing offer arrangements to expand family-based care options as an alternative to residential care.

Submissions will be invited from the out-of-home care sector to deliver specialist therapeutic family-based care services.

This will allow us to identify family-based care options for sibling groups, children with a disability or high medical needs or requiring specialised behaviour support, or where children may otherwise be placed in a non-family based placement.

**What will it cost?**

We estimate that the trial will cost $3 million over 2 years. Carers recruited to provide specialist family-based care would receive intensive therapeutic training and commit full-time to a structured behavioural and therapeutic program that responds to children’s needs. This also includes the cost for a specialist professional team to support the child’s care arrangement.

**How many jobs will be created?**

We anticipate that specialist teams employed by the service provider would include up to 7 full-time staff.

**More information**

For more information, please email: OHCRI@communities.qld.gov.au