

We seek your support to create a world where: *“Sibling Kinship Carers are recognised as a distinct and unique form of carer, and they receive the tailored support they need to ensure they thrive for life.”*

Overview

The Sibling Kinship Carers Initiative seeks to reform policies and practices for kinship sibling carers within the out of home care system. Sibling carers—both formal and informal—play a critical role in providing stability, cultural continuity and emotional support. Yet, current frameworks often overlook their unique contributions and challenges, letting sibling kinship carers fall between the cracks.

PeakCare’s Goal: Ensure sibling kinship carers are recognised as a distinct carer category and receive tailored support to thrive while caring for their brothers and sisters.

Why Supporting Sibling Carers Matter

Many sibling kinship carers take on the role of caring informally before officially becoming a formal kinship carer. Despite this, the transition to full-time care of a child is likely to be a big adjustment for sibling kinship carers, as they are less likely than other kinship carers to have parented a child, particularly an older child; they may be on average younger than parents in the population, and they may not have anticipated such responsibilities at that point in their lives ¹

Benefits: Research shows children in kinship care typically experience better emotional and behavioural outcomes than those in non-relative foster placements.

Challenges: Research shows sibling kinship carers face financial stress, role conflict, lack of formal recognition, social isolation and limited access to counselling or legal advice. ²

Our Key Commitments

Children in care must have their specific and unique “sibling rights” upheld:

Children in care must have the fundamental right to remain with and know all their siblings, and to live free from any expectation that they become informal or formal carers, while also having access to family healing. Breaking up sibling groups or keeping them apart can cause demonstrable harm, so care plans should prioritise co-placement or, where that is not possible, guarantee proactive, ongoing contact. Privacy laws must not obstruct a child’s knowledge of their immediate family, and each child’s care plan should transparently list all siblings and include clear commitments to sibling connections. Policies and procedures across departments must uphold sibling rights at every stage—particularly in case planning and leaving-care processes—to prevent children from being thrust into caring roles by default and to recognise the sibling group itself as a distinct group deserving holistic support and healing.

Sibling kinship carers must be formally recognised as a distinct and unique type of carer:

Sibling kinship carers must be formally recognised, counted and supported as a distinct cohort within out of home care systems. Departmental and national reporting should include sibling kinship carers as a unique category—capturing both formal and informal arrangements in administrative datasets and national tables—with oversight bodies monitoring their prevalence. Child safety and protection policies and procedures must explicitly address sibling kinship care in case planning and leaving-care plans, ensuring that the first sibling to exit care carries no undue responsibility. Moreover, each jurisdiction’s peak bodies and carer organisations should be funded to provide dedicated peer-support mechanisms, enabling sibling carers to connect, collaborate and share

¹ [“They Finally See Me, They Trust Me, My Brother’s Coming Home” Recognising the Motivations and Role of Siblings Who Become Kinship Carers](#)

² [Unrecognized: Kinship care by young aunts, siblings and other young people](#)

resources. Advocacy and support agencies must also recognise the specific pressures faced by sibling kinship carers and work alongside them to tailor services that meet their unique needs.

Sibling kinship carers must receive tailored support recognising their needs are unique and different to the needs of care leavers and/ or kinship carers:

Sibling kinship carers require dedicated funding and support programs—co-designed with sibling carers themselves—that go beyond existing leaving-care and kinship support, reflecting the substantial social and financial returns of keeping families together. Leaving care planning must deliberately include sibling caring responsibilities, recognise the unique pressures siblings face when they decide to care, and must outline clear roles and resources to maintain and strengthen sibling relationships as some leave care and others remain. Furthermore, foster and kinship care agencies should be empowered to develop and share innovative, tailored practices that identify, engage and support sibling kinship carers as a distinct cohort within the child safety system.

Definition

When we talk about sibling kinship carers for the purpose of this national campaign, we mean people aged 18 and older who are the primary carer for their younger sibling/s who are under 18 and in out-of-home care.

Sibling kinship carers - examples	Not sibling kinship carers - examples
An 18 year old who was in out of home care became the primary approved carer for their 16 year old younger sister from her 18 th birthday (the 18 year old is a sibling kinship carer)	A 19 year old who has finished school and provides care every day for his sibling who has a disability and lives with their parents (<i>not a sibling kinship carer because his sibling is not in out-of-home care</i>)
A 20 year old who was never in out of home care has a 14 year old brother in out of home care who is choosing to live with him (the 20 year old is a sibling kinship carer, even though the placement has not been arranged/approved by the Department of Child Safety)	A 17 year old who stays home from school often to care for her 10 year old sister when she is not attending school. Both children live with a foster carer (<i>not a sibling kinship carer because the foster carer provides primary care for both children</i>)
A 21 year old was in and out of care throughout her early childhood, lived with her biological mother from aged 14-18 and now lives independently. She recently found out she has a younger biological brother who is 8 years old. The 21 year old becomes the primary carer for her brother (the 21 year old is a sibling kinship carer)	A five year old goes into care for six months and then is reunified with her birth parents. When she turns 15, she chooses to live with her 19 year old sibling who has moved out of home (<i>not a sibling kinship carer because even though she has a care experience, the 15 year old is not currently in out of home care</i>)
A 19 year old was in out of home care for ten years with a 16 year old from another family in a foster care placement. When the 19 year old moved out, the 16 year old came to live with her (the 19 year old is a sibling kinship carer because they consider themselves as kinship family)	Two brothers, aged 18 and 20 both lived together in a residential care placement and now live together in an apartment. The 20 year old has a job and the 18 year old relies on him to pay rent and most bills (<i>not a sibling kinship carer because both brothers are over 18</i>)

Learn More

For a personal overview of this Initiative and its importance, please watch Caroline at the QFCC Youth Summit 2024: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZ1rDe5b3z0>

Next Steps & Timeline

Activity	When
Launch stakeholder consultations	July– October 2025
Report on findings	November 2025
Advocate for legislative reforms	Ongoing to 2026

Contact & Involvement

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To contribute your voice or learn more contact the Project Lead. Together we can ensure sibling carers are recognised, supported and empowered.