Futures Foster Carers (primary and respite) have many and varied roles and responsibilities. Outlined below are some key aspects.

- The provision of safe, reliable and consistent care to meet the emotional, social, educational and physical needs of the child or young person.
- Provision of a safe, stable and nurturing home / care environment for the child or young person.
- Provision of a safe living / care environment.
- Provision of physical care such as feeding, toileting, bathing, and dressing, as required.
- Input into therapy programs in areas such as communication, mobility, counselling and independent living skills as applicable.
- Support education and life skills learning.
- Support areas of development, including social skills, relationships and self-care.
- Support the child or young person’s areas of interest and activities such as hobbies, sport, music, dance and art.
- Provision of health management including monitoring of medical and psychological needs and attending medical and therapy appointments. Administration of medications and use of medical equipment may be required.
- Supporting a child to maintain their sense of family identity and culture.
- Keeping the child or young person’s best interests (including cultural) in mind as part of daily care planning.
- Providing advocacy support to the child or young person and to contribute to future planning with them or on their behalf (as appropriate).
- Respect the child or young person’s privacy, to ensure confidentiality about the child’s previous and present family circumstances.
- Treating the child or young person with dignity and respect at all times.
Accepting the child or young person

- The carer gives the child or young person the message that he or she is unconditionally accepted and valued for who they are, with their strengths as well as challenges.
- Promoting the interests and talents of the child or young person, and what is important to them.
- Promoting the child or young person's sense of belonging with their own biological and/or kinship/extended family members and significant others such as previous foster family.

Responding sensitively

- Have an awareness and understanding of the child or young person’s life experiences.
- Have an ability to respond therapeutically to promote healing in a child or young person who has experienced various forms of trauma, including abuse or neglect.
- Helping the child or young person to manage feelings and behaviour.

Working together

With the child or young person

- Promoting independence and life skills.
- Supporting the child or young person prepare for adult life.
- Look for ways to promote the child or young person’s right to choice and decision making (within safe limits).
- Promoting the child or young person’s culture and sense of identity.

Yourself

- Look after yourself.
- Spend time on relationships that are important to you.
- Ensure yourself and your family obtain appropriate respite care.
- Seek support from the Futures Foster Care team if you are having a difficult time, or things are tough for you. The Futures team are here to support you, as well as the child or young person in your care.
- Take initiative in your own learning and development as a foster carer, and be responsive to training opportunities provided or suggested by the Futures Foster Care team.
- Recognise that life changes may impact on your ability to maintain a placement.
Working together

With care partners

- Maintain regular contact with the Futures Foster Care team, and work together to support the child or young person, promoting the child’s safety/wellbeing.
- Work in partnership with the foster care team and other stakeholders involved in the child or young person’s care such as school and government departments.
- Keep the Futures service informed about the child or young person in order to promote decision making for the child’s safety and wellbeing.
- Inform the Futures Foster Care team of any significant changes in your own life that may impact on the care of the child/young person or affects your approval as a primary or respite carer.
- Notify the Futures Foster Care team or UnitingCare West after hours support service of any emergency or critical incident affecting the child/young person.

Who has ultimate responsibility?

You have a significant responsibility for the child or young person in your care, as you provide the day to day supports and care.

However, it is important to be mindful that whilst you act in a parental role in many aspects, the child or young person’s legal guardian is the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS).

The DCPFS have the ultimate responsibility and decision making authority for the child or young person in your care.

It can be difficult for foster carers to maintain a healthy balance between forming attachments with a child, which is critical, and maintaining an understanding that the child or young person is not their own son or daughter, and has a legal guardian in DCPFS.

This complex role requires you as a foster carer to consistently work in a way that promotes attachment and positive relationships, but also promotes and upholds the status of the legal guardian, and significant partnerships such as with Futures Foster Care team.
The duty of care is a responsibility shared by families, foster carers, case workers, departments and placement agencies. The provision of good quality care is not limited to the qualities, skills and care provided by the foster carer, but equally depends on the quality of casework and support of the child and family.

The duty of care involves a responsibility and obligation to ensure that the child or young person in your care is looked after appropriately and in accordance with agency standards. At the most fundamental level this means that foster carers, in the provision of day to day care to children and young people placed with them, must promote the child or young person’s right to:

• adequate food, clothing and shelter
• medical, dental and other treatment that meets the health needs of the child
• receive education, training and employment opportunities according to their age developmental needs and interests;
• maintain contact with family and other significant persons and to have them actively involved in their lives where this is deemed appropriate.
• All foster carers will be supported by the Futures Foster Care team to provide care for a child or young person in a way that promotes both the child or young person and carers wellbeing.