

CHILD PROTECTION — REGISTERED CARERS

756. Ms L. Mettam to the Minister for Child Protection:

I refer to registered carers and I ask:

- (a) During the month of January 2022, what was the total number of registered carers with four or more children placed with them by category of relative and non-relative carer, by district;
- (b) During the month of January 2022, how many carers had a “carer record screening” overdue or not recorded by category of relative and non-relative carer, by district; and
- (c) During the month of January 2022, how many carers had overdue “carer reviews” by category of relative and non-relative carer, by district?

Ms S.E. Winton replied:

The Department of Communities (Communities) categorises carers as “family” or “foster” rather than “relative” or “non-relative” and advises:

(a) On 1 January 2022:

Armadale – 6 family, 14 foster
Cannington – 7 family, 3 foster
East Kimberley – 0 family, 2 foster
Fremantle – 5 family, 2 foster
Goldfields – 1 family, 3 foster
Great Southern – 2 family, 0 foster
Joondalup – 3 family, 6 foster
Midland – 7 family, 11 foster
Midwest Gascoyne – 6 family, 4 foster
Mirrabooka – 2 family, 7 foster
Peel – 6 family, 5 foster
Perth – 3 family, 6 foster
Pilbara – 5 family, 2 foster
Rockingham – 2 family, 2 foster
South West – 7 family, 5 foster
West Kimberley – 4 family, 1 foster
Wheatbelt – 13 family, 2 foster

(b) This data is not available in January 2022. On 16 December 2021, there were no foster carers with children in their care without screening, and the following number of family carers by district:

Armadale – 0
Cannington – 2 family
East Kimberley – 0
Fremantle – 1 family
Goldfields – 2 family
Great Southern – 0
Joondalup – 2 family
Midland – 0
Midwest Gascoyne – 0
Mirrabooka – 0
Peel – 1 family
Perth – 2 family

Pilbara – 3 family
Rockingham – 2 family
South West – 1 family
West Kimberley – 1 family
Wheatbelt – 0

An urgent placement with a family member or significant other can be made under s.79(2)(b) of the *Children and Community Services Act 2004*, based on an initial safety assessment and may occur prior to the commencement of formal record screening. Where urgent care arrangements occur, Communities undertakes a safety assessment, focusing on the safety, wellbeing and best interests of the child. These urgent arrangements can occur in circumstances where children enter Communities' care suddenly or there is a sudden change to their care arrangement.

Carer screening forms part of the carer assessment process and includes a Criminal Record Check and a Client and Child Protection Check.

Communities actively monitors and actions where record screenings are not recorded.

(c) On 1 January 2022:

Armadale – 29 family, 14 foster
Cannington – 28 family, 14 foster
East Kimberley – 12 family, 5 foster
Fremantle – 25 family, 13 foster
Goldfields – 3 family, 6 foster
Great Southern – 16 family, 11 foster
Joondalup – 24 family, 17 foster
Midland – 51 family, 34 foster
Midwest Gascoyne – 33 family, 9 foster
Mirrabooka – 24 family, 15 foster
Peel – 36 family, 25 foster
Perth – 22 family, 11 foster
Pilbara – 9 family, 7 foster
Rockingham – 20 family, 12 foster
South West – 47 family, 23 foster
West Kimberley – 33 family, 8 foster
Wheatbelt – 10 family, 4 foster

A person who applies to become a foster carer is assessed against five criteria, known as competencies identified in the *Children and Community Services Regulations 2006*. The CEO must be satisfied that the individual:

is able to provide care for a child in a way that promotes the wellbeing of the child, promotes the child's family and interpersonal relationships, and protects the child from harm

is able to provide a safe living environment for a child

is able to work cooperatively with officers, a child's family and other people when providing care for a child

is able to take responsibility for the development of his or her competency and skills as a carer, and is a person of good character and repute.

Providing support to foster carers forms part of an ongoing process, through regular visits with the foster carer and de-briefing. The foster carer review meeting is an additional annual event, with information gathered from visits or other contact with the foster carer throughout the year contributing to the annual (12 month) review process and re-assessment against the competencies.

Communities recognises that at times, annual reviews can be impacted by carer availability, distance or a sudden change in circumstances or care arrangement.

