

Information Paper

Carers Register rebuild

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Overview

The Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) has 3 Out of Home Care (OOHC) databases to support its regulatory functions. Two of those - The Accreditation Portal and the Residential Care Workers Register (RCWR) - are hosted on the Pega platform. The Carers Register is currently being rebuilt on the same platform so that all three systems will sit together in one place.

Over the past 10 years, the OCG has received feedback from the sector about how the Carers Register could better support day-to-day business processes. Since the RCWR was introduced, the

sector has also shared positive feedback about how it works, and the OCG is using this feedback to improve the Carers Register as part of the rebuild.

At a glance changes to the Carers Register

- Improved functionality, agency dashboard, key statistics and reports.
- Interface between the Carers Register and the Working with Children Check (WWCC) system.
- Interface between the Carers Register and the RCWR.
- Built in Head of Relevant Entity (HRE) approval to progress Carers Register reportable allegation notifications.
- Automatic flags against reportable conduct matters to support information sharing.
- Requirement to record decisions against adult household members.

Requirement for regulatory changes to support the rebuild

Some of these changes will need to be supported by regulatory reforms to ensure the legislative framework aligns with the capabilities and requirements of the new register. While the rebuild is being developed in anticipation of these proposed regulatory reforms, the reforms remain subject to the necessary legislative and Government approval processes. Further updates will be provided on the timing and form of the regulatory changes in due course.

Improved functionality, agency dashboard, keys statistics and reports

The updated Carers Register will have a completely new look and feel. It will serve the same purpose, but it will be easier to use, with better navigation, improved features, clearer workflows, and stronger reporting tools.

The updated Carers Register will have an agency dashboard that will include agency details, single sign in, key statistics, business intelligence (BI) reports, and functional navigation.

Agency details

- The agency's Carers Register Primary Administrator details.
- Contact details as nominated by the agency, to support the 'other agency check'.

Single sign in

- The Pega system will allow for a single sign in for all users, rather than separate logins for each individual portal.
- Depending on the user permission granted by the agency to an individual, there will be an ability to toggle between the Accreditation Portal, Carers Register and the RCWR.
- The agency's Carers Register user list, providing clear visibility of all users across all OCG OOHC databases.

Key statistics

High level statistics (count) which can be drilled into for more detail, including:

- in progress applications
- in progress roles on current households (carer and/or household members)
- current households
- suspended carers
- current reportable allegations
- expired WWCC
- expiring WWCC

- household member turning 18 years
- individuals without a WWCC – limited cases with immediate action required.

Business Intelligence reports

- Carers Register reports, which will contain the agency's own data in real-time.
 - Report categories will be confirmed as the rebuild progresses.

Functional navigation

- Record an out of home carer application.
- Search by individual name or household number/address.
- Manage individuals, carer/s and households.
- Work queues:
 - OOHC application (any in progress OOHC applications).
 - Finalise reportable allegations (any current allegations waiting finalisation).
 - HRE approval (any reportable allegations awaiting HRE approval).
- Agency management:
 - Manage agency users (Primary or General Administrator).
 - Manage alerts contacts (Primary Administrator).
 - Manage responsible locations (Primary Administrator).

Interface between the Carers Register and the Working with Children Check system

The rebuild will include an interface between the WWCC system and the Carers Register, to support agencies to verify a carer applicant, authorised carer or adult household member in real time.

The WWCC is considered the source of truth, as the person must verify their identity via Service NSW with approved identification to progress their WWCC application.

What does this change mean in practice?

At the carer application stage, once an individual's details (applicant carer(s) or adult household member(s) are entered, the Carers Register will interface with the WWCC system to identify a match. The real time verification will return and pre-populate the WWCC status and expiry date on the Carers Register.

Subject to the relevant regulatory amendments being made, it would mean that all carer applicants and their household members will be required to have a valid WWCC number (application or clearance) to be recorded on the Carers Register.

Once an agency enters a carer's applicant's details on the Carers Register and a WWCC match is found, the designated agency can progress with the carer application process.

Once carers and household members are recorded on the Carers Register, the agency will be able to re-verify WWCCs directly via the register, where these are due for renewal, to ensure individuals maintain a valid check.

This function satisfies the WWCC verification process, meaning there is no need to also verify carer applicants, authorised carers or their adult household members via the WWCC employer portal.

The changes will:

- create efficiencies by embedding real time WWCC verification and re-verification on the Carers Register, satisfying the legal obligations in relation to the WWCC verification process
- populate WWCC details and status in real time

- improve Carers Register data quality and accuracy, as the WWCC is a unique individual identifier (no two people have the same WWCC)
- improve the accuracy of individual records to ensure individuals with associations with any other designated agency are correctly identified and the 'other agency check' is working as intended
- align with the current RCWR verification functionality.

Interface between the Carers Register and Residential Care Workers Register

The interface between the two registers will strengthen information sharing (through the new 'Other Register Check' and proactive [Chapter 16A](#) information sharing) and increase visibility of all engagements, associations and flagged concerns for individuals recorded across both the Carers Register and RCWR.

What does this change mean in practice?

Subject to the relevant regulatory amendments being made, designated agencies will be required to conduct the 'Other Register Check' for carer applicants or adult household members where an association is identified within the RCWR, and an agency has indicated that it holds relevant information about the individual.

To support this process, agencies will be able to see associations an individual holds across both registers, meaning if they have a role as a residential care worker, this will be visible.

When the new Carers Register is live, if an authorised carer or household member has an association with an agency on the RCWR, and this indicates that an agency holds information about the person that is relevant to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children, the 'other register check' will not be a mandatory requirement as part of the transition. However, agencies are encouraged to use this new visibility of the associations, and proactively seek the relevant information held by another agency under Chapter 16A.

The changes will:

- increase the visibility of individual associations and support improved information sharing about individuals who have a role as a carer applicant, authorised carer or adult household member and a residential carer worker (or vice versa)
- reduce the reliance on individuals voluntarily disclosing a role as a carer applicant, authorised carer or adult household member and a residential carer worker (or vice versa)
- extend the flag system across registers to ensure concerns are clearly communicated and information sharing is better supported
- support the primary purpose of both registers, to ensure only suitable people are engaged to work with or care for children and young people in OOHC.

Head of Relevant Entity approval to progress Carers Register reportable allegation notifications

To align with the RCWR, the Carers Register will require the HRE's approval to progress a reportable allegation notification on the Carers Register. This is to ensure that matters that do not meet the threshold for a reportable allegation, or have been recorded in error, do not appear on the register. Unlike the RCWR, the allegations will not be escalated to the OCG Reportable Conduct Directorate for approval.

What does this change mean in practice?

Overall, there is no change to the way designated agencies manage and investigate reportable conduct matters. The change relates only to how the matter is recorded on the Carers Register.

Once a reportable conduct allegation has been entered on the Carers Register, the HRE user will receive an automated email advising of the name of the carer or adult household member it relates

to. The HRE will be required to review the details and either approve or decline the matter on the Carers Register. Only once the HRE has approved the matter will the allegation become visible on the Carers Register to other agencies who also hold an association with the same individual. If the matter is declined by the HRE, the record is not retained against the individual's Carers Register record. In addition to this, the HRE approval will also trigger an automatic notification to other agencies where a current association is held.

Once the HRE is satisfied that the matter has been finalised, the agency must enter the finalised outcome on the Carers Register. The HRE will receive an automated email to approve or decline the outcome. Once the HRE has approved the outcome, the matter will be finalised on the Carers Register.

The changes will:

- improve the validity of reportable conduct allegations being recorded on the Carers Register to reduce the number of allegations being recorded in error
 - build in quality assurance processes so that only allegations approved by the HRE are recorded on the Carers Register
 - align with the RCWR, improving consistency in process for many agencies.
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Automatic flags against reportable conduct matters

Reportable conduct allegations for authorised carers, adult household members and residential care workers, will automatically trigger a 'flag', within and across both registers, where there is a:

- current allegation
- finalise-contact agency allegation.

What does this change mean in practice?

Where a reportable conduct allegation is entered on the Carers Register and the entry is approved by the HRE, the following rules and flags will apply:

- **Current allegation:** Where the individual is subject to an allegation, the current allegation will be visible against the individual's record to all agencies with an association.
- **Finalised allegation – no record:** Where there is a 'finalised allegation – no record', the record is only visible to the lodging agency.
- **Finalised allegation – contact agency:** Where there is a 'finalised allegation - contact agency', the allegation will be visible against the individual's record to all agencies with an association. The system will automatically trigger a 'flag' when an individual's role is end dated.

The changes will:

- automate flags, where there is a 'current' or 'finalised allegation – contact agency'.

These flags will be visible across registers to inform the 'other agency check'.

Requirement to record a decision against adult household members

The current system only allows for a decision to be recorded against carer applicants or authorised carers (for example, 'cancelled - with or without concerns'). However, adult household members are subject to the reportable conduct scheme and are considered as part of the overall carer household suitability.

Subject to the relevant regulatory amendments being made, the updated Carers Register will require a decision to be recorded against adult household members, including an indication of whether the agency has information about that individual relating to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children, when a household is end dated or when moving out of the household. This will be the same as decisions recorded against the carer to flag where concerns have been raised.

What does this change mean in practice?

A decision must be recorded against a household member when:

- refusing/withdrawing a carer application, where an adult household member resides in a carer household
- ending a carer household
- removing an adult household member from a current carer application or approved carer household.

The changes will:

- require designated agencies to record relevant information relating to the end date (with or without concerns) on the carer file
- improve the visibility of adult household members, including where concerns are held, across agencies and roles (both the Carers Register and RCWR)
- support the primary purpose of the Carers Register, to ensure only suitable people are engaged to care for children and young people across the carer household.

Action plan

Preparing for the New Carers Register	
OCG activities	Agency action checklist
Facilitate and publish: • update the sector when regulatory amendments have progressed • planned information and e-learning sessions • updated user guides and fact sheets	☐ Keep up to date with the project roll out ☐ Determine who should attend information and e-learning sessions ☐ Determine who is responsible for monitoring and managing changes to agency processes
Share information regarding the Carers Register with Principal Officers and Carers Register Primary Administrators.	☐ Check the agency's Carers Register Primary Administrator is the most suitable role within the agency to manage the roles and responsibilities of the changes ☐ Ensure the Primary Administrator's contact details are up to date with the OCG
Data migration from the current Carers Register to the new Carers Register.	☐ Keep the Carers Register data up to date and correct any errors ☐ Work with and respond to the OCG regarding Carers Register BI reports and data remediation ☐ Review current Carers Register Primary Administrator to confirm if this person is still the most appropriate role/person – update the OCG if changes are made ☐ End date any Carers Register 'users' that no longer require access ☐ Prepare to create users in the updated Carers Register ☐ Review Carers Register 'responsible locations' to ensure they are up to date and reflect agency processes and structure

	☐ Contact carers-register@ocg.nsw.gov.au for support with data remediation if required
Information session 1 - Rebuild messaging, change overview, interface, walkthrough of sector readiness plan Date and time: To be confirmed Suggested attendees: - Principal Officer and HRE - Carers Register Primary and General Administrators - Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement (QACI) roles	☐ Confirm information session 1 attendance ☐ Review, manage and report on proposed changes and impact to agency's processes
Information session 2 - Registration, location and user creation Date and time: To be confirmed Suggested attendees: - Carers Register Primary and General Administrators - QACI roles	☐ Confirm information session 2 attendance ☐ Review, manage and report on proposed changes and impact to agency's processes
Information session 3 - Accessing the system, dashboard, recording an application, interface between CR, RCWR, and WWCC Date and time: To be confirmed Suggested attendees: - Carers Register Primary and General Administrators - General users - QACI roles	☐ Confirm information session 3 attendance ☐ Review, manage and report on proposed changes and impact to agency's processes
Information session 4 - General functions and record management Date and time: To be confirmed Suggested attendees: - Carers Register Primary and General Administrators - General users - QACI roles	☐ Confirm information session 4 attendance ☐ Review, manage and report on proposed changes and impact to agency's processes
Information session 5 - Ongoing record management Date and time: To be confirmed Suggested attendees: - Carers Register Primary and General Administrators - General users - QACI roles	☐ Confirm information session 5 attendance ☐ Review, manage and report on proposed changes and impact to agency's processes

Carers Register and WWCC Interface	
OCG activities	Agency action checklist
Review current Carers Register data and send out reports to agencies that identify where existing Carers Register data does not match records in the WWCC system.	☐ Actively manage and respond to the OCG's Carers Register business intelligence and/or WWCC remediation reports — Who is receiving these reports? — Who is responsible for updating the report to note action or completion? — Who is responsible for reviewing agency carer files and identification records? — Who is responsible for obtaining updates to date and correct identification records? — Who is responsible for responding to the OCG? — Who is responsible for correcting the Carers Register where required?
Update the Carers Register operational manual and 'how to' instructions to support and demonstrate the interface between the Carers Register and WWCC.	☐ Review and amend agency practice to align with the updated Carers Register WWCC verification function. — What needs to be considered? • process change • roles and responsibilities ☐ Review current applicants and their adult household members on the Carers Register to ensure WWCCs have been entered and are accurate.
Carers Register and Residential Care Workers Register interface	
OCG activities	Agency action checklist
Update the Carers Register operational manual and how to instructions to support and demonstrate the interface between the Carers Register and RCWR.	☐ Who is responsible for reviewing and, where applicable, updating or developing policy? ☐ If there are individuals engaged across both roles within your agency – is there an internal information sharing process to manage conflict, suitability, and/or risks. ☐ What is the approval process if an individual is engaged across both roles? ☐ Conduct an audit of individuals who may already be engaged as both an authorised carer and a residential care worker.
Update the Carers Register Other Agency Check Protocol to reflect the interface between the Carers Register and RCWR. This will be communicated to the sector so those agencies registered to access the Carers Register can consider this as part of practice moving forward.	☐ Who is responsible for considering the Protocol related to the 'other agency check' to ensure this is reflected in agency process? ☐ Who will be responsible for recording and/or extracting relevant information to share?

Requirement to record a decision against adult household	
OCG activities	Agency action checklist
The OCG will update and publish: - information for carers/household members - a Carers Register presentation for Carers	☐ How will potential carer applicants and their household members be made aware of what will be recorded about them on the Carers Register? ☐ Who will provide current carers and adult household members with the updated information?
Update the Carers Register Guidance notes and operational manual to include decisions and outcomes relating to adult household members.	☐ Who will review the decision-making tools to ensure adult household members are considered? ☐ Where will the approval process for recording a flag against an adult household member be recorded in the agency file? ☐ How will adult household members be informed of decisions made about them and the relevant information that has been recorded on the Carers Register? ☐ What will the approval and QACI processes consider to guide consistent practice?
Support the sector to understand and implement the Carers Register Other Agency Check Protocol that facilitates the sharing of information about household members.	☐ Who is responsible for considering the use of and implementing the 'other agency check' protocol and forms or equivalent?
HRE approval required to progress reportable allegations	
OCG activities	Agency action checklist
Update Carers Register Guidance notes and operational manual to include HRE approval process.	☐ The HRE is aware this change is coming and the Carers Register PA and HRE attend Carers Register reportable allegation information and training sessions
Update and publish the Carers Register Reportable Allegation Business Rules and Carers Register reportable allegation operational guides.	☐ Prepare to update agency policy, procedure and practice
Facilitate Carers Register reportable allegation information and training sessions for Primary Administrators and HREs.	☐ HRE attends planned OCG information and eLearning session relevant to the HRE role
Automatic flags linked to reportable conduct matters	
OCG activities	Agency action / checklist
Update the Carers Register Guidance notes and operational manual to include how the automatic flags in the Carers Register should be used to inform outcomes and decisions.	☐ Who will review the decision-making tools to ensure adult household members are considered? ☐ Be prepared to review and update the agency's decision-making tools, reports, panel or de-authorisation etc. to prepare for end dating individuals where there is a current or 'finalised allegation – contact agency' flag

	☐ Where will the approval process for recording a flag against an adult household member be recorded in the agency file? ☐ What will the approval and QACI system cover to ensure the agency has consistent practice?
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Background

The Registers

The Children's Guardian Act 2019 (CG Act) and Children's Guardian Regulation 2022 (CG Regulation) establish the current legislative framework for the NSW Carers Register and RCWR. The OCG administers both registers.

The Carers Register was introduced in 2015 and is a centralised database of people who have applied to, or have become an authorised carer, to provide statutory or supported out-of-home care (OOHC) in NSW.

The Carers Register helps to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people in OOHC by maintaining a centralised record of authorised carers, to ensure mandatory probity and suitability checks are completed and to assist designated agencies in identifying and sharing information where a person may be a risk to children.

The OCG also introduced the RCWR in 2022. This register was built based on feedback and advice from the OOHC sector and included efficiencies for designated agencies to support them in their work.

Carers Register

The primary users of the Carers Register are designated agencies, accredited by the Children's Guardian to provide OOHC to children. Designated agencies often provide both foster care and residential care to children. For those agencies accredited to provide foster care, they must use the Carers Register to inform the authorisation process. Once an agency is accredited to provide foster care, the OCG registers the agency and provides the agency with access to the Carers Register.

The Carers Register helps to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people in OOHC by maintaining a centralised record of authorised carers. It ensures mandatory probity and suitability checks are completed to assist designated agencies in identifying and sharing information where a person may be a risk to children.

The Carers Register Regulation requires designated agencies to record certain information on the Carers Register, including details of the suitability assessment required under the Care Regulation and completed by the agency, and whether the agency has determined the person is capable and suitable to be an authorised carer.

The Carers Register Regulation also requires information about 'relevant residents' to be recorded on the Carers Register, persons (other than a child in OOHC) who reside for more than 21 days on the same property as a relevant authorised carer, or a person who has applied to be a relevant authorised carer. The Carers Register supports the exchange of information about those who apply to be a carer, those already authorised as carers, and their relevant residents between agencies.

Residential Care Workers Register

The RCWR is a separate register to capture and record information about residential care workers. Designated agencies must record all residential care workers on the RCWR before they are able to work in a residential setting.

The RCWR was introduced in response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The OOHC sector also raised issues around the need to prevent unsuitable people from moving between agencies, particularly where they are engaged

by more than one agency. The RCWR records information about all residential care workers before they can work with children in OOHC.

In developing the RCWR, the shortfalls of the Carers Register were considered, and improvements were made to ensure that the RCWR was more efficient to support the OOHC sector in managing their work.

The improvements introduced by the RCWR included real time WWCC verification of a person at the commencement of an application on the RCWR. This allows the agency to validate the person's WWCC and verify they are permitted to engage in child related work through the RCWR without having to verify separately on the WWCC database.

The RCWR also introduced the concept of a 'Contact agency' flag for other agency checks, which could be set to 'Yes' (where there was relevant information to share) or 'No' where there was no relevant information to share. This meant that the requirement to conduct an 'other agency check' is limited to agencies only sharing information where the contact agency flag is marked as yes and the other agency holds relevant information or concerns. This has led to efficiencies within the sector with the RCWR indicating when information is mandated to share.