

relief care

By Katrina Mason

To be able to go on maternity leave, spend time as a family with our new baby, adjusting, bonding, and taking some time out, was important to me and my family.

On the other hand my family day care business, the families, the children and our relationships were just as important to me.

How could I do both? How could I go on maternity leave? How could I support the children and families that I currently work with? And how could I continue working with those families and children in the future by maintaining business continuity during my leave?

Our home is double story split level and for most of the part my family day care business operates from the downstairs area. Perfect set up to be able to have a relief carer come in and cover for me during my maternity leave. But was it possible?

I contacted Family Day Care Australia (FDCA) and was directed to the Policy Manager, Pola Nadas, about my proposal. We discovered that the Tasmanian Standards did open up the possibility for extended periods of relief care to be provided; the decision is that of the licensing scheme*.

FDCA also gave me information regarding the relevant insurance information. My relief carer was able to work under my insurance until such time as I suspended my policy for the six month maternity leave period; then she was required to take out her own insurance. The ability to suspend my insurance was great news and saved us money.

I collaborated with the families and the children and considered the idea from all angles such as introducing the relief carer, preparing the children, their families, my family and the relief carer for the transition, the settling strategies, length of leave, and my continued involvement in the business.

One strategy that we used to prepare the children which was fun and worked well was putting a tape measure on the



Baby Lily

fridge. Every time I went and had a scan of the baby I would put the photo next to the measuring tape and together as a group we would mark the baby's growth. We would then talk about the baby's growth and the birth, my time in hospital, the relief carer, meeting the baby and so on, which was great preparation for the children for my departure.

I found a scheme which supported my and my family's vision and then set out to find a suitable relief carer who met the standards and would support the program under which my family day care business operated. Ten people responded to the position via email and telephone but some of them did not meet the qualification standards and could not cater for my extended ratio. The business hours did not suit others and so the list was whittled down to three.

Those applicants were given an overview of family day care as a business and a tour of the facilities; I also discussed the program and how the service operated.

And then there were two!

After an interview process I selected my relief carer, hired the local community hall

and organised a family fun day where the children and their families could meet her and she could meet them.

The carer registered with the scheme and began familiarising herself with the Act, Tasmanian Standards, scheme policies and procedures and existing individual policies and standards.

I was sent some relief carer policy examples from other schemes and from those examples created my own which was relevant to my situation and environment.

The relief carer came for a few visits before starting part-time. During the initial stages we did a crossover period so that the relief carer, families and children could have time to build their relationships, feel secure and confident with each other, their environment and the transition.

"I FOUND A SCHEME WHICH SUPPORTED MY AND MY FAMILY'S VISION AND THEN SET OUT TO FIND A SUITABLE RELIEF CARER..."

Six months after the birth of my daughter Lily, I can confidently say that the relief care arrangement was the best thing I could have done for me and my family, for the children in care and their families, and for my business. I am able to focus on being a mum to my two children, knowing my business and the children I care for are in good hands – with the added bonus of being able to 'pop downstairs' from time to time and say hello to my family day care children. 🌸

* Reference: Tasmanian Licensing Standards for Approved Registration Bodies, Class 1 (0–12 years) 1.3 Relief Carer — Function Approved Registration Bodies, Class 1. Schedule 2: Relief and Support Care (Page 34).