



Worcestershire
FOSTERING

Learning and Development for Foster Carers – October 2024

1. Introduction and Legal Framework

The Fostering Regulation 2011 require a fostering agency to “provide foster carers with, training, advice, information and support as appears necessary in the interests of the children placed with them”.

The Statutory Guidance on Fostering says that foster carers should be supported to maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them. Foster carers should be able to evidence the fostering Training Development Standards (TSD) within the specified timescales.

Worcestershire Fostering (WF) recognises the importance of training which supports carers to increase their skills and knowledge and has a positive impact on the care they offer to looked after children. This policy sets out how WF meets the requirements set out above.

WF has a payment for skills fee structure which is based on the training and development that foster carers have undertaken and their active experience of fostering. The Payment for Skills Policy should be read in conjunction with this policy as it sets out the training requirements that foster carers must meet to progress and maintain the fee level.

2. Types of training and learning opportunities

WF recognises that there are a wide variety of training and learning opportunities available to foster carers which are delivered in a variety of formats. There is an expectation that foster carers will access training provided by WF. WF also recognises that foster carers may also access training from other sources such as their work or through personal research and where this is relevant to their role as a foster carer this should be included in their Training Record.

Formal training

This includes formal classroom or video conferencing training sessions with other foster carers and professionals provided by WF, specific conferences and training courses run by external organisations including foster carers workplace.

Online training and distance learning

This includes online learning (e-learning) courses accessed through WF, information that foster carers have obtained via the internet and courses run by external organisations. This must be evidenced by certificates and through discussion with the supervising social worker on how it relates to their practice as a foster carer.

Independent learning

This includes reporting on the radio, TV or in newspapers that foster carers have listened to or read. This must be evidenced through discussion with the supervising social worker on how it relates to their practice as a foster carer.

Support groups

Support groups for foster carers provide a valuable opportunity for foster carers to meet together, share concerns and ideas and develop their learning.

Foster carers are encouraged to attend meetings and social events organised by the WF or self run foster carer groups.

Specialist training

WF will commission training for foster carers looking after children with specific needs where this is required to care for the child or is beneficial to the child.

3. Foster Carer Training Programme

The Learning and Development Programme runs from April to March each year. A copy of the programme will be sent to foster carers prior to the start of the new training year and includes details on how to book on training. Additional training may be added during the year and foster carers will be notified of this by the WF Training Team.

The WF Training Team will regularly email foster carers and staff an update on the availability of courses plus other training-related news and information.

4. Pre-Approval Training

E- learning

During the assessment process applicants will be asked to complete the following training:

- Emergency First Aid
- Safeguarding
- Safer Caring
- Understanding Behaviour
- Valuing Difference

The assessing social worker will ask the WF Training Team to liaise with applicants to arrange for them to have access to this training.

Skills to Foster\Kinship Preparation training

Non – related carers (mainstream) who have not previously fostered are all required to complete Foster Carer Preparation training prior to submitting an application requesting a fostering assessment.

Applicants who are existing foster carers are not required to complete this course again. They will have already completed the course with their current or previous agency and their experience as foster carers will have covered the areas of learning from the course.

WF runs a course which is specifically tailored to Family and Friends carers. The expectation is that applicant will complete the course prior to their presentation to panel. WF recognises that in a few situations, such as when children have been placed under Regulation 24 this may not be possible. With the approval of the Registered Manager it can be agreed that applicants complete the training post approval. The maximum time scale for this is 6 months post approval and applicants need to clearly understand that to maintain the Level 1 Fostering Fee they must complete the training in that timescale.

Training Support and Development Standards (TDS)

Foster carers are expected to complete the relevant TDS workbook to evidence they have the relevant skills and knowledge required of foster carers. There are 3 workbooks for different types of carers and with different timescales which are on the Department for Education Website www.gov.uk/collections/guidance-for-fostercarer or your supervising social worker.

Type of Carer	Timescale for Completion
Mainstream Foster Carers	12 months from approval
Family and Friends Carers	18 months from approval
Short Break Carers	12 months from approval

Procedure for completion of the TDS workbook.

One workbook can be completed per fostering household. When it is a two-carer household it should clearly evidence how both carers are meeting the standards.

As part of the assessment of mainstream foster carers will have met some of the competencies within the Training Support and Development Standards workbook. Their supervising social worker should work with them to identify which outcomes from the relevant workbook they have already met.

The Kinship training also meets some of the competencies within the TSD workbook and a workshop as part of the Kinship Preparation Training is offered to family and friends carers to support them with this.

All carers should be able to collect evidence to demonstrate they meet the requirement of the standards through their day to day role as foster carers. Training is only one way of doing this and attendance at meetings, discussion with professionals as well as the direct care of the child can all be used as evidence. Supervising social workers should work with carers to assist them to identify evidence that the different standards are being met. WF can provide a mentor and will also hold workshops to assist with completion of the workbooks.

The supervising social worker will sign off each standard and when the workbook is complete it will be sent to the supervising Team Manager for sign off.

Once signed off by the Team Manager the carers will be issued with their certificate and the supervising social worker will complete the TSD episode in the electronic record that records completion of the standard.

Further information on completing the standards can be found in Appendix 1.

Mandatory Core Training

Foster Carers who are new to fostering are expected to complete the courses set out in the table below and renew them every 3 years via Refresher training sessions. They will be unable to progress to Level 2 under the Payment for Skills unless they have completed these courses.

The Supervising Social Worker should check with those who have fostered before whether they have completed these courses with their previous agency, and that the training was in timescale. i.e. have they completed First Aid training in the preceding 3 years.

Training and timescale
Emergency First Aid To be completed by the one carer during the Assessment Stage, and by the second carer within 6 months of approval.
Safeguarding To be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage
Safer Caring To be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage The second carer can attend a 2 hour "Bitesize" Safer Caring session provided that the first carer has already attended an Initial Safer Caring session
Understanding Behaviour To be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage The second carer can attend a 2 hour "Bitesize" Understanding Behaviour session provided that the first carer has already attended an Initial Understanding Behaviour session
Valuing Difference e-learning course to be completed by both carers during the Assessment Stage. Then face to face / video conferencing session to be completed by both carers within two years of approval.
Family Time To be completed by one carer within 12 months of approval.
What Is Health To be completed by one carer within 2 years of approval.

Developmental Training

WF offers a wide range of developmental training which builds on the mandatory core training. There are no timescales for completing developmental training but foster carers need to be aware of the training criteria for progression to and maintenance of the payment for skills level.

In discussion with their supervising social worker the foster carer should identify courses that will develop their skills and knowledge to support them to meet the needs of the children placed with them. Foster Carers may also want to develop their skills and knowledge to enable them to offer placements to a wider range of children.

Commissioning of Specific Training

When a need for specific training is identified whether this is for an individual foster carer or a group of foster carers WF will commission the training to ensure that foster carers are being supported to meet children's needs. Examples of this would be Physical Intervention training or Parent and Child training.

Additional Support for Foster Carers

It is important that all WF's foster carers are able to access training and WF recognises that some foster carers may need additional support. The supervising social worker should identify whether their foster carers will require additional support. There are a number of ways that this can be provided which include

- Support needs of individual carers being shared in confidence with the course facilitator who can then take them into consideration when delivering the course
- Course materials being available in a range of formats
- Training being provided on a one to one or small group basis with the use of an interpreter if required
- For foster carers living outside Worcestershire the commissioning of courses from other local agencies.

Where a foster carer has additional training requirements these should always be discussed with the Learning and Development Advisor to see how they can be met.

Safer Caring for Household Members

WF recognises the importance of all members of the fostering household understanding safer caring. As members of foster carers households can vary in age and understanding it expects the assessing\supervising social worker to ensure that this is discussed and reviewed with other household members.

During assessment

- the assessing social worker will discuss with every member of the fostering household, taking into consideration their age and understanding, their view of fostering and their understanding of safer caring
- every member of the proposed fostering household should be involved in drawing up the safer caring household policy and the assessing social worker should ensure that it is understood depending on age and understanding.

Post Approval

As a minimum as part of the foster carers annual review their supervising social worker will discuss safer caring with other household members

When drawing up individual Safer Caring\Risk assessment for children to be placed consideration needs to be given to what information needs to be shared with other household members while respecting the privacy of the child to be placed.

In some situations it may be beneficial for household members to complete an e-learning course or to attend the classroom or video conferencing session on Safer Caring when they are likely to be involved in supporting the approved foster carer

e.g. an adult child who is baby sitting or taking the child out to activities. The supervising social worker should discuss this with the foster carers and book the household member on the training if appropriate.

Appendix 1 - Guidance for Foster Carers for the completion of the Training, Support and Development Standards Workbooks

The aim of the Training, Support and Development Standards workbook is for you to show that you have the relevant skills and knowledge as foster carers. You will be able to show evidence of this through your practice and the knowledge that you have gained. You may do this through a number of ways which can include: training courses, supervision sessions, reviews (for children and yourselves), reading relevant information, distance learning course, e-learning etc.

Foster carers are expected to complete the relevant TSD course to evidence they have the relevant skills and knowledge to be approved as foster carers. There are 3 workbooks for different types of carers and with different timescales which are on the Department for Education Website www.gov.uk/collections/guidance-for-foster-carer or your supervising social worker.

Type of Carer	Timescale for Completion
Mainstream Foster Carers	12 months from approval
Family and Friends Carers	18 months from approval
Short Break Carers	12 months from approval

The workbooks can be completed on a computer or can be printed so you can handwrite.

All workbooks will have some guidance and information in them as well and you should read through this to help you to understand what is expected. This guidance has been written to provide you with some further guidance and hopefully clarify some of the questions you may have.

General information and expectations

If there are two carers in the household it is expected that both carers complete all parts of the workbook. If there is an area that one carer cannot cover, the reason for this should be written in the workbook. Both sets of evidence can be written in the same book and you may find that a lot of evidence is joint.

If you are completing a joint book you must make it clear as to which carer is providing the evidence. If it is joint evidence, then put either names (or initials) at the side of it so this is clear. This is very important so it clear to those who are looking at them to know how both carers have contributed.

The layouts of the workbooks are similar but there are some differences. The important one is for you to be sure what information you are supposed to be showing that you know! All books have key standards, The Foster Carer workbook has 7 main standards, the Short Break workbook and Family and Friends workbook both have 6.

Starting the workbook – evidence from assessment process

When you start the book – your supervising social worker social should help you cross reference what you have already shown evidence of during your assessment process.

This is a great start and you should be encouraged by how much is already completed. All you need to do is write in the appropriate sections of your workbook e.g. 1.1a – completed through the assessment process. The evidence you have met during this process should be joint, so you can just write it the once and put both initials at the side of it. When completing your evidence, it is useful to make it clear which criteria you are giving evidence for so, for example, just put a, b, c etc on the page under the section and then make sure you have written something for each of them. That is also a good way of making sure you haven't missed any.

Completing the rest of the book

So now comes to the bits you need to complete following your assessment process. Always look carefully at the wording of the section you need to evidence. For example, some will say 'Demonstrate' in which case you should be able to provide something that shows you have been able to do what is being expected of you. Others will say 'Be aware of' in which case you need to write something that will show your awareness of what you need to do – even if you haven't done it!

Remember this is an induction workbook. It is not a diploma and you do not need to write essay answers, a few sentences under each criteria should be able to cover it. What is important is that you are showing your understanding, knowledge etc so make it personal to your experiences. Examples are often helpful as it shows you have understood what is expected.

Some of the criteria are a bit wordy – and if you unclear as to what is expected then discuss with your supervising social worker.

Do not use children's real names as evidence. You can use initials if you feel you need to. This is to ensure confidentiality of children and young people's personal information.

It is best not to put evidence in the portfolio that includes any identifying information about the children. If you do want to use this as evidence, then you can show it to your SSW, so they can see it and sign it off and as long as it is cross referenced you do not need to actually include it in the portfolio.

If you do want to include evidence that has children's names in (or any other identifying information) please make sure that this information is blocked out and cannot be seen. You are likely to have to photocopy it again once it has been blocked. Some of the criteria you will have covered as part of your discussions with your supervising social worker in supervision. If this is already recorded in your supervision – you do not need to write it again – just put it discussed in supervision and the date.

If you have gathered resources (e.g. books, leaflets, printed information from the internet or policies) that have helped you towards meeting the standards you do not need to include this as evidence – keep these for your own information. Evidence in the portfolio should be evidence of your work and your understanding of information that you have read.

If you are wishing as part of your evidence to put in a reference e.g. foster carer handbook or a book you have read. You should also write something else to show that you have understood it.

Similarly, if you have completed training courses, reading, e-learning etc you will need to be able to show your SSW that you would be able to put your learning from this into practice and make this clear in the book. For example, so you could have a discussion with your SSW in supervision and write in the book the date of the discussion as it should then be recorded on your supervision notes or give an example of how you have put it into practice that meets the outcome.

Role of the SSW

Each of the individual criteria needs to be signed off by your supervising social worker. Before doing this, they should be clear that all carers in the household have met the criteria and have either provided the evidence for this in the book – or referenced where it can be found e.g. supervision, or child's review report.

Some supervising social workers may do this as you go along whereas others may choose to look at it all at once when the book is completed. Whichever way the workbooks should be part of supervision discussions and if you are having difficulties in any area you can ask about it.

Final Sign Off

Once your supervising social worker considers that the workbook is fully evidenced, they will send it to their Team Manager who has responsibility for final sign off. This is for quality assurance to make sure that the same standards are being applied to all the workbooks.

Once the book has been signed off it will be returned to your SSW who should return it to you. Keep it safe as this is your evidence that it has been completed. You will also receive a certificate and a letter to confirm your completion.

If there is any area where it is considered some further evidence is required, you will be told which areas and given some further time to complete. Do not panic – the point of doing this is for you to show you have met the requirements and for us as a service to ensure that you are guided and have the information you need to do the complex role that is expected of you as carers.