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Fostering Changes Lives



Information Sheet 1

Competencies Needed for Foster Care

There are seven standards for Fostering Services for the training, support and development of foster carers. To be a successful foster carer, you will be expected to work to all the standards below and to demonstrate this ability fully by the end of your first year as a foster carer.

1. Understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people

This standard refers to your knowledge, understanding and views regarding matters such as equality, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice, as well as confidentiality and treating all children as individuals.

2. Understand your role as a foster carer

This standard is to do with understanding the council's policies and procedures, working as a member of a team, being organised in your work as a carer and knowing your role and responsibilities as a foster carer.

3. Understand health and safety, and healthy care

This standard relates to safe caring, keeping your home safe and yourself and any foster children safe. It is also about "healthy care" for children.

4. Know how to communicate effectively

This standard is about developing your communication skills for working with children, young people and their families, as well as with other professionals in your fostering service, and other organisations. These are fundamental skills for foster carers and are needed to achieve all the other standards

5. Understand the development of children and young people

This standard sets out what you need to know about the development, behaviour and special needs of the children and young people who become fostered. This includes how you would encourage a child's development and your understanding of the impact of neglect and abuse on children.

6. Keep children and young people safe from harm

This includes understanding child protection procedures, your role in working with other agencies and in recognising and responding to abuse in order to keep children and young people safe and protected from harm.

7. Develop yourself

This refers to your ability to use support and supervision in order to develop your skills as a foster carer and to ensure your own well being whilst being a foster carer. This will help you to provide the highest standard of care.

These basic standards are expected from all foster carers. It is accepted that new foster carers may need experience to learn or to demonstrate their abilities in all these areas. After approval all carers will be supported in their learning so that all these competencies have been shown and evidenced in order to achieve a successful completion of the standards within the first year.

Where couples are approved as foster carers, they may complete a joint portfolio of evidence.

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Information Sheet 2

“Skills to Foster” - Preparation Training

The course is divided into eight areas of learning; there are various group discussions, exercises, written materials and video clips for consideration and exploration. A foster carer co-facilitates the group. Below are the eight areas:

Session 1

Who are the foster carers and what are the required qualities and skills? An introduction to the Assessment Portfolio. Who are the children and young people? Introduction to Safe Care.

Session 2

Examination of issues of identity; the importance of memories; promoting equal chances and opportunities and recognising prejudices and discrimination.

Session 3

Consider the legal framework of Working Together in Partnership to meet the children's needs.

Session 4

Considers the varying life experiences that children/young people may have lived through and how this may affect you as a fostering family.

Session 5

Considers behaviours, why children might present challenging and complex behaviours; introduces the concepts of attachment and resilience; provides one behaviour management model.

Session 6

This session looks at how to provide safe care for children and how to keep your own family safe. The processes for dealing with complaints and allegations of harm are explored.

Session 7

Introduces prospective carers to the 'Looked After' children record system; provides the opportunity to view the associated paperwork and place it in the context of planning for children.

Session 8

Explores how children move on from their foster care placement and the range of issues that may be involved.



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Information Sheet 3

The Proposed Charter for Foster Care December 2010

Below is the proposed national charter for foster care which is being developed across 2011/12 to ensure that all foster carers are supported to provide the very best care to looked after children.

Children come first

- Children in foster care deserve the same chances to enjoy family life and childhood, and should be treated in the way that loving parents treat their own children.
- Children are individuals and must be supported to develop their own identity and aspirations, fulfil their potential, and take advantage of all opportunities to develop their talents and skills.

Foster carers should expect to

- Provide a positive adult role model, treat the foster child as a member of their family, and promote and advocate for all aspects of the child's development, including educational attainment and physical and emotional health and wellbeing.
- Support their foster child by taking part in learning and development, understanding and using the skills and approaches that make a positive impact.
- Work in a team with key professionals in the child's life to support their physical and emotional health and wellbeing, and development and learning.

The local authority should

- Acknowledge the importance of the child's relationship with their foster carer, and treat foster carers respectfully, fairly and as a core member of the team around the child.
- Listen to and involve foster carers in decision-making and drawing up and reviewing the care plan/ placement plan and provide foster carers with full information about the child.

The local authority should also

- Support foster carers to make reasonable and appropriate decisions on behalf of the child living in their family and work with parents to help them understand why other people may need to take decisions about their child in order to enable them to have a normal childhood.

And the fostering service provider must

- Provide their foster carers with the support services and development opportunities they need in order to provide the best care for children.
- Make sure foster carers understand any support, fees, allowances and holiday they will receive, including in cases of dispute with the service or gaps in placements, and that foster carers understand the service's processes and procedures.



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Information Sheet 4

Fostering Service - Assessment and Approval Process

1	Your enquiry	Information booklet will be sent to you.
2	You contact the Fostering Service	We arrange for a qualified social worker to visit you at home to explore your interest and explain what we are looking for.
3	If you wish to proceed, you send your completed application form to the Fostering Service.	We make a decision about your application and a social worker will be allocated to start your assessment.
4	References, Disclosure and Barring Checks and medicals. (Stage one)	Enquiries will be made to the Police, Health and Local Authorities, relevant schools, employers and personal referees. These are confidential. A full medical assessment is also required.
5	Checks returned.	If checks are positive your application will proceed. If checks are not positive further discussions will be held with you and it may not be possible to proceed with your application.
6	Assessment of suitability. (Stage two)	Carried out by a qualified Fostering Social Worker via exercises, discussions, and involvement of your whole family.
7	Preparation Training	You attend this short course to learn about the task of a foster carer and the needs of fostered children.
8	Assessment Report	When this has been completed you will see and comment on a copy and also have an independent visit from another worker in the fostering team.
9	Panel Presentation	A panel of people (Fostering Panel) must consider your application and the assessment report. You are encouraged to attend. The panel makes a recommendation and a senior manager makes the decision whether to approve.
10	After Approval	Once approved, you will be given a Foster Carer's Handbook and induction to enable you to feel equipped to receive a child. Every year, you will be reviewed to ensure that we are working well together.
11	Certificate of achievement	Within the first year of becoming an approved foster carer you will be required to complete a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate that you are able to meet the outcomes related to seven standards for training, support and development for foster care.
12	Non - approval	If you are not approved, the reason for this will be given to you. You may appeal to the Decision Maker or to the Independent Review Mechanism. After due consideration a final decision will be made.

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Information Sheet 5

Fostering Allowances and Payments – 2019/20

FOSTERING ALLOWANCE RATES

2019/20 AGE BANDS	£ BASIC MAINSTREAM WEEKLY FOSTERING ALLOWANCE
00 - 04	132.00
05 - 10	146.00
11 - 15	167.00
16+	194.00

DAY CARE PAYMENT	Mainstream £2.77 per hr Contract - £6.05 per hr
MILEAGE	25p per mile

ADDITIONAL FOSTERING ALLOWANCES

Updated each year to new rates

ALLOWANCES	AGE	MAX
HOLIDAYS Paid for up to 2 weeks per year 2 x Basic Mainstream	00 - 04	264.00
	05 - 10	292.00
	11 - 15	334.00
	16 +	388.00
SETTING UP Paid to new adopters to set up with furniture etc. Receipts required up to the maximum	ALL	444.00 MAX
DISTURBANCE (50% 0-4 Scale Rate)	ALL	61.00

Short Break	
Overnight	48.00
Day care up to 5 hours	13.30
Over 5 hours	26.60



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Information Sheet 5

Fostering Allowances and Payments - 2019/2020
(Continued)

FOSTERING FEES

AGE BAND	WEEKLY CONTRACT PAYMENTS Paid only when children are in placement
00 - 04	132.00 + 182 = £314.00
05 - 10	146.00 + 182 = £328.00
11 - 15	167.00 + 182 = £349.00
16+	194.00 + 182 = £376.00

CONTRACT PLUS WEEKLY FEE RATE Paid to Carer each week - Mainstream allowance is also paid for each child while in placement	£315.00
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SPECIFIC PLACEMENT WEEKLY FEE RATE As for Contract Plus	£711.58
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Information Sheet 6

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Are there any age limits for foster carers?

Legally any foster carer must be at least 21 years old. There is no legal upper age limit, fostering can be a physically and emotionally demanding role which requires a reasonable level of fitness and emotional maturity - age may only be a rough guide to these attributes.

2. Do I have to be married or have a partner?

Not at all; single people can become foster carers exactly like couples; some children are more suited to single carer households - it depends on the needs of the child and the personal strength of the carer.

3. I have a partner, are there any guidelines about how long we should have been together?

Most children who are looked after by the Council have experienced serious disruptions and many changes in their lives. They particularly need stable and settled households to recover and thrive. Because of this, we usually expect couples to have been living together at least 2 years and to have established a settled lifestyle which is secure enough to withstand the added challenges of fostering.

4. I am already a child minder. Can I be a foster carer too?

This is possible, but we would usually be cautious about combining these roles. This is because the two roles are quite different and may lead to competing demands which are not easy to resolve. Fostered children are also unlikely to cope with comings and goings of minded children with the same ease as your own children.

5. What kind of checks do you carry out on applicants?

We are legally obliged to explore several areas by asking for others' opinions or for information they hold. Each adult in a prospective foster home must declare any criminal offences and undergo an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. Medical reports from the GP of each applicant are considered by our Medical Adviser. We also must take up two personal references from people who are not related to you and who have known you for a long time. We will check whether you have been known in the past to any other agencies, such as Health Visiting and Education Welfare as well as Children's Services. If you have relevant employment we may ask for a reference from your employer. National guidance directs us to check out previous partners especially where children were born to the relationship. If there are good reasons for not doing this, we may waive this expectation. We would always try to consult with any children living away from home too.

6. How long does it take to become a foster carer?

A fostering social worker will visit you at home within 2 weeks of receiving your Family Detail Form, to discuss your situation and our needs. We would then expect that you attend a "Skills to Foster" course and complete an application form. Your allocated social worker would normally complete the visits, discussions and references within 3-4 months. Altogether it may take between 6-9 months to become an approved registered foster carer.

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Information Sheet 6

Frequently Asked Questions (Continued)

7. Are children expected to have their own rooms?

Generally, yes we expect each child to have the privacy and space afforded by their own bedroom. However young siblings may sometimes share with each other.

8. My partner has been in trouble with the police - does this automatically disqualify us?

Petty offences committed as a teenager do not usually affect an application to foster; other offences will be looked at carefully so that we can assess any potential risk to a fostered child.

There are offences which automatically disqualify fostering applicants - these are any cautions or convictions for offences of assault, violence or abuse on a child or young person committed by an adult. We ask all applicants to tell us of all offences however small at the initial interview stage. Withholding any information is viewed as serious.

9. I work full time and will not be able to attend the training course.

We make every effort to run the initial training sessions at times which fit in with other demands. Usually we do two evenings (usually Wednesday) and two Sundays to cover all 8 sessions within a month.

Further training after approval and registration is offered at a range of times and can sometimes be completed by home learning and support from your fostering link worker.

10. I smoke cigarettes - how does this affect my application?

We all now know that smoking has a damaging effect upon health. It is especially damaging to young children who are exposed to others' cigarette smoke. For this reason we will not place children under 5 years in a smoking household. Foster carers who are smokers and carers of older children also need to carefully consider the example they are setting to any children they may foster. Looked after children living in foster homes are expected to enjoy a smoke free atmosphere. In supporting the health and well-being of fostered children, the fostering service clearly prefers non-smoking applicants but does not automatically disqualify smokers.

11. I have a disability which affects me sometimes more than others - can I still apply?

Yes of course you can. Medical conditions and disabilities are assessed both by the fostering social worker and our Medical Adviser - a range of people with some medical conditions or disabilities have successfully acted as foster carers. All applicants have to undergo a health assessment via their GP.



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Information Sheet 6

Frequently Asked Questions (Continued)

12. I have young children of my own still at home - how might they be affected by fostering?

Many fostering families have children of their own - they can be a marvellous asset, helping fostered children to settle in and feel accepted. It is a big thing to share your home and parents with other children and we value the often unsung contribution that foster carers children make.

At the same time fostering other people's children can bring extra stresses to your own children - they will need to be listened to and helped not to feel taken for granted. Usually your own children will be older than any fostered child as this has been shown to help the success of foster placements.

13. Do you have a policy about not physically smacking children?

Yes, we are very clear that foster carers may not smack children under any circumstances. We also include in this policy any humiliating or degrading punishments which are damaging to children.

14. Do approved foster carers have to do more training?

Yes, we have a two year rolling programme of "Foundation" training - this covers a wide range of areas, but we do expect carers to attend core courses during their first year. This assists in achieving the required standard of care and skill in order to be awarded your certificate of achievement. Core courses include "Child Protection Procedures", "Health and Safety Matters" and the "Role of the Foster Carer". There may also be specialist training around the more specific needs of a foster child - e.g. Understanding autism, caring for a child who has been sexually abused. Continuing development helps foster carers to deepen their knowledge; training is an important part of helping carers to achieve a rewarding and successful fostering career.



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Information Sheet 7

This is the North East Lincolnshire Council Pledge made to all children who are looked after.

We Promise to...

- Care about you and your future.
- Listen to your views and to let you know what's going on.
- Value you as an individual with your own particular needs, wants and feelings.
- Do all that we can to provide a safe, secure and nurturing foundation of care.
- Offer you excellent information and support when you are old enough to leave care, as you move into adulthood.
- Care for each of you as a unique individual, ensuring that you have an up to date care plan based on your own particular needs.
- Make every effort to provide appropriate services that will meet your diverse needs, including any ethnic and cultural requirements.

