ordinary people doing extraordinary things
The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care

A Guide for Foster Carers
May 2007
What are the Standards?

The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care have been developed by the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC). CWDC is responsible for ensuring that people working with children, young people and their families have the best possible training, qualifications, support and advice.

The Standards have been designed to support you as a Foster Carer from approval through the first two years of service. They give your Foster Care provider a framework for your training and professional development which will mean you get the best possible training, information and knowledge to truly make a difference to the lives of the children you care for.

The seven Standards cover the main areas of the foster care role and set out what Foster Carers should know, understand and be able to do:

Standard 1: understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.

Standard 2: understand your role as a Foster Carer.

Standard 3: understand health and safety, and healthy caring.

Standard 4: know how to communicate effectively.

Standard 5: understand the development of children and young people.

Standard 6: safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm).

Standard 7: develop yourself.

The Standards have been adapted from the CWDC Induction Standards for workers in children’s social care and recognise the unique position of Foster Carers providing a service in their own homes 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“I see training as part of my support and I accept that I need all the help I can get to be able to do my job properly and get the most enjoyment out of it.”

Sue, Foster Carer
What children and young people expect

When developing the Standards, we involved children and young people to make sure they had their say in what they think you should know about when you first start working with, caring for or supporting them.

Some of these messages are summarised briefly below, mapped against the Standards they relate to:

**Standard 1: understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people.**

A good Foster Carer "treats you equal to other children in the family"

Foster Carers "should know about Total Respect" and "confidentiality policies". They should know "not to force you to practice a religion".

The most important part of a Foster Carer's job is "to accept the foster child's good and bad points as life is trial and error. They should not judge you by your paperwork as you are a person".

**Standard 2: understand your role as a Foster Carer.**

Any good Foster Carer "is someone who has a very good knowledge of the care system", someone who "cares for you".

The most important part of the job is "making sure the looked after children are happier and they feel safe where they're staying".

**Standard 3: understand health and safety, and healthy caring.**

Some of the things which Foster Carers need to know about are "a good diet, allergies, drugs and alcohol...".

The training courses on top of my list for Foster Carers..."health and safety, dealing with/understanding teenagers, managing aggressive behaviour, manage the emotional and personality upsets and build-ups, self harming, first aid...".

Foster Carers should have "skills in cooking!"

**Standard 4: know how to communicate effectively.**

A good Foster Carer is someone who "listens" someone who "takes your views into consideration...".

The most important skills a foster care should have are "in listening, understanding, good communication...".

Top of my training list "...counselling".

"My Foster Carer always took the time to listen and teach me about life, even though I never listened as much as I should have I learned a lot from her experiences".

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1 These are verbatim extracts from responses given during consultation exercises on the Standards with children and young people up to the age of 18.

2 DfES Total Respect Programme (Children's Rights Officers and Advocates, 2000) – www.dfes.gov.uk/qualityprotects/work_pro/project_2.shtml

3 this scored more highly than any other issue discussed with children and young people
Standard 5: understand the development of children and young people.

A good Foster Carer is someone who "can relate to your problems and be there for you when you need them"..."who cares but makes fair rules".

Foster Carers should know about "the past life...the lifestyle the young person lived before [the placement]". They should know about "what stuff you like" and "social pressure".

Foster Carers should have skills in "knowing what your needs are"..."helping with homework"...".

My favourite time with a Foster Carer was "being loved, getting looked after, being accepted as a family member, getting me through college and hard times, giving me confidence".

Standard 6: safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm).

Foster Carers should know about "how to handle the system and how to support young people"..."how their [child's] background might affect their behaviour"..."what the looked after children have been through".

Foster Carers "should know about the law".

The most important part of a Foster Carers job is "making sure they make you safe, look after you, be there for you, and are someone to talk to".

The skills Foster Carers should have: "accept"..."love"..."to provide help".

Standard 7: develop yourself.

Foster Carers need "support for when they need to talk to someone"..."support from everyone involved with the child/young person".
Do the Training, Support and Development Standards apply to all Foster Carers?
Yes. The Standards are a national benchmark and will give you the recognition you deserve, as well as ensuring that your knowledge and skills are up to date.

All new and existing Foster Carers will be expected to show that they meet the Standards. If you are a kinship carer, providing short breaks or respite, a nominated carer or similar we would like to encourage you to use the Standards to help you identify the support, training and development you might need. You should ask your Foster Care provider what you have to do.

How will the Standards benefit me?
By working through the Standards you’ll learn more about fostering and, if you have been fostering for many years, the Standards will make sure that your knowledge and skills are up to date. The training framework that accompanies the Standards will help you set out your personal development plan for the future. The Standards will also help you choose how to progress your career in fostering to provide the best possible service to the children and young people you look after. At the end you will receive a CWDC Certificate of Successful Completion in recognition of what you have achieved. You will be able to take this with you if you move to another area and use as evidence of your learning if you take up an NVQ or a different job working with children. In the future it is likely that levels of payments to Foster Carers will be linked to their skills and experience and the type of placements they can offer.

How do I study?
Foster Carers welcome the opportunity to learn more about fostering by going on training courses or attending support groups. But training is not just attending courses. Foster Carers are individuals who all learn in different ways and the Standards recognise this by allowing you to be flexible in how you show or evidence that you have met the Standards. The Workbook which accompanies the Standards sets out in a simple way how examples of meeting everyday challenges can be used to evidence the skills or knowledge that you have.

Your link worker/supervising social worker will explain what is involved and help you through the process. They will tell you what training courses are available and will try to offer training at a time which is convenient to you. Support groups can also be used for sessions on particular topics or for general support.
How will the Training, Support and Development Standards be assessed?
You will progress through the workbook with your link worker/supervising social worker, planning ways for you to learn about each of the areas within the Standards. You will then record examples of how your learning has been put into practice and what the outcomes of your learning have been. You should keep records of any training you have attended, reports you have written, feedback on your work as a Foster Carer or other learning activity in your portfolio which you can use as evidence of your learning. Your link worker/supervising social worker or training officer will be assessing you and will sign off each area in the workbook as you complete it.

The fostering manager, another person in your Local Authority Foster Care provider or your Independent Fostering Agency who has not been involved in the assessment will ensure that the completed workbook meets the Standards and will sign it off.

How long will it take?
New Foster Carers will start learning whilst they are being assessed to be Foster Carers and taking part in the preparation training offered by all Foster Care providers. They will be expected to complete the Standards within twelve months of being approved as Foster Carers although in some circumstances it may be necessary for this time limit to be extended. Experienced Foster Carers will not take as long, as they can use their experience of fostering to show how they meet the Standards. All Foster Care providers will need to ensure that their existing Foster Carers have completed the Standards by 2011.

What can I expect from my Foster Care provider?
Your provider has a duty to arrange for you to learn about the different ‘areas’ within the Standards and to make sure that you know enough to meet the ‘outcomes’ for each area. They will provide you with learning opportunities and support through your link worker/supervising social worker.

Foster Care providers should provide financial support to enable Foster Carers to attend training sessions.

Do the Standards lead to a qualification?
No, but the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care have been carefully mapped to units within the Health and Social Care NVQ. This means that if you choose to take the NVQ qualification, you will be able to use the work that you have done in completing the Standards as evidence. Similarly, if you are already working towards your NVQ you will not have to duplicate your learning in completing the Standards.

What happens if I fail?
The Standards have been developed in a way which makes them accessible and achievable for all Foster Carers. They should easily sit within your existing annual review and should help you identify future development opportunities to enhance your existing skills.
What will I get at the end?
You will get a CWDC Certificate of Successful Completion.

What next?
There will always be new things to learn. It is important that you keep up to date with changes in the law, new practice or procedures or develop more in-depth knowledge and skills to support you in your role as a Foster Carer. You will be encouraged to sign up for NVQs, to become assessors or mentors to other Foster Carers or contribute to training programmes for Foster Carers. Your link worker/supervising social worker or training officer will advise you on opportunities for your continuing professional development.

“If my home grown children were being looked after by someone else then I would want the very best for them and that is why it is so important to accept all the training on offer; we are looking after other people’s children.”

Chris, Foster Carer
CWDC’s vision is to build a world-class workforce for children, young people and families.

CWDC exists to improve the lives of children, young people, their families and carers by ensuring that all people working with them have the best possible training, qualifications, support and advice. It also helps children and young people’s organisations and services to work together better so that the child is at the centre of all services.

for more information please call:
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or visit www.cwdcouncil.org.uk

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