

## Fast Track method for the Foster Care Training, Support and Development Standards at Leicester City Council

This case study describes how Leicester City Council have used online assessments to support them to Fast Track experienced Foster Carers through the Training, Support and Development Standards and how they are using the assessments to

### Highlights

- Quickly established the assessments would support experienced Carers to “fast track” through the Standards and help map across NVQ evidence.
- **Successfully completed and signed off 80 Carers against the Standards. On target to have everyone through by 2011.**
- Supervising Social Workers use the assessments to work out the learning needs of Carers and facilitate the appropriate method to fulfil those learning needs.
- **Excellent feedback from Supervising Social Workers and Foster Carers.**

### Background

Leicester City Council employs over 15,000 people and with a population of 280,000 Leicester is the biggest City in the East Midlands.

In March 2009 there were 168 Foster Carers alongside 72 Kinship Carers and 338 children and young people placed with those Carers.

### Email feedback from a Senior Practitioner who attended one of the workshops

Hi, Just a brief note to comment on the CIS induction training which I attended. **I think the programme for Carers is excellent.** As always with the introduction of new information there is a good deal of anxiety involved and when Carers are dealing with challenges and time restraints any additional expectations can sometimes feel like a bridge too far! However, **the simplicity of the assessment and the way in which it has been designed really does make it incredibly user friendly** which will hopefully start off us all on the right foot. **The relaxed nature of the training delivery was also very well suited to Carers.** Many thanks. *Sally Bull, Senior Practitioner*

## Foster Care Training, Support and Development Standards

In 2007 the Foster Care Training, Support and Development Standards were launched by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) as part of a program to both professionalise Foster Care and support Foster Carers' personal development.

In Leicester we knew from the outset that our approach had to include a wide range of methods to enable our Foster Carers to build their evidence portfolios and demonstrate that they meet the Standards.

We have a large number of experienced Foster Carers including mature Carers and Carers that have already completed NVQ Level 3, Caring for Children and Young People. We also needed to cater for everyone's different learning styles, but make sure that we had a "Fast Track" method for the experienced Carers.



## How we got started...

We started by putting together a number of different options including worksheets and a system of mapping case records to identify existing evidence. We had recently supported many Carers through their NVQ Level 3 so we started by mapping what evidence we had from their NVQ that could be used to build the evidence portfolio.

We also felt that the discussions that the Supervising Social Workers have as part of Supervision and Annual Reviews would form a vital part of the final evidence.

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## Continued.....How we got started

However a number of experienced Carers who had completed their NVQ prior to 2006 wanted to know why they had to demonstrate that they meet the CWDC Standards. We explained that it is important that they demonstrate up to date knowledge and skills and assured them that we would support them in achieving this quickly.

We talked to neighbouring Authorities to see what they had done and Leicestershire County Council shared the work that they had done with CIS Assessment so we carried out a small pilot using their online assessments with our Supervising Social Workers. **We quickly established that the online assessments would support the experienced Carers to “fast track” through the Standards and help them to map across the evidence from their NVQ.**

**One of the additional benefits we identified was that the assessments would support the Supervising Social Worker to carry out their role as outlined by the CWDC around checking the learning of their Foster Carers, using questioning and observation.**

So part of the implementation plan was to get started with 50 Carers and review the progress after twelve months. It was agreed that a series of workshops, co-hosted by CIS Assessment and Leicester City Council would be set up to support the Supervising Social Workers to use the Manager Dashboard, give them the opportunity to “have a go” at the assessments in a supported environment and find out how to use the information that the assessments generate.

## Since then...

Those Foster Carers who had completed their NVQ prior to 2006 used the online assessments to evidence and map their knowledge to Foster Care Training Support and Development Standards and as a result they have all been signed off against the Standards. The 50 Carers from the first group have ALL successfully completed their evidence portfolios and been signed off.

The Supervising Social Workers have been using the assessments to generate additional evidence to support Foster Carers to build their evidence portfolios, primarily to work out the learning needs of each Carer and facilitate the appropriate method to fulfil those learning needs, which usually can be as straightforward as the supervision discussion.

By using the assessments as part of supervision, it has enabled the Supervising Social Worker to look at why a Foster Carer had answered a question the way they had and discussing the results proved a really valuable method for generating evidence. In addition the discussion is then linked to the Standards and the “Learning Needs Report” guides the Supervising Social Worker to potential areas for development or outcomes that may require further evidence / training.



## Foster Carers and PC's

The Foster Carers that have used the assessments have found them straightforward and easy to use and the results pages have provoked many a lively debate. **But most importantly the assessments are quick and Foster Carers have been able to fit them in around their busy schedules.**

Almost all of our Carers have access to the internet and a PC, however one Supervising Social Worker took a suggestion from the workshops and arranged a different supervision session at the local library to get one of their Carers who hadn't got access to the internet started with the online assessments and the Foster Carer was then able to finish the assessments at a fellow Foster Carer's house.

Given the success so far we are now making the assessments available to all of our Foster Carers, including those where IT skills are limited and the plan is for the Supervising Social Worker and the Foster Carers to complete the assessments together in a variety of settings.

## And Finally.....

The evidence portfolio generated by the online assessments, the Foster Carer and the Supervising Social Worker has been reviewed by a verification panel of two or three managers which has enabled us to spot check the quality of evidence that has been produced and ensure consistency. However as at February 2010 we have already successfully completed and signed off 80 Carers against the standards and we are on target to have everyone through by 2011, with the help of CIS Assessment.

As we approach 2011 we plan to use the assessments to support newly approved Foster Carers' development to understand what additional training they need and evidence how successful the training has been afterwards. In addition we hope to use the assessments to support the use of alternative training methods to fulfil specific needs.

### To contact Leicester City Council about this Case Study:

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### To find out how online assessments can save you money and increase your evidence of workers' competence:

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