



Department
for Education

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care

**Guidance for Managers, Supervising
Social Workers**

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The Guidance

This guidance has been developed in response to feedback from Fostering providers regarding the provision of further guidance and support for the TSD. It captures key learning from implementation experiences and incorporates specific feedback from supervising social workers, managers and training officers.

The guidance has been produced with input from an advisory group, comprising the Fostering Network, supervising social workers and managers from fostering service providers, both independent and local authority.

This document forms part of a new resource pack for fostering service providers to help them with implementation. The pack includes:

- This guidance document which summarises the requirements.
- Guidance factsheet: Getting started with the TSD Standards.
- Guidance factsheet: The workbook.
- Guidance factsheet: Evidencing the TSD Standards.
- Guidance factsheet: Assessing foster carers' workbooks.
- Guidance factsheet: Engaging all foster carers.
- All of these materials are available to download at <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/fostercare/fostercarestandards>

Introduction

The TSD Standards build on the Induction Standards for staff who work in children's social care and have been adapted to meet the needs of foster carers, and to reflect their unique position of looking after children in their own homes.

The TSD Standards provide a national minimum benchmark that set out what all foster carers should know, understand and be able to do within the first 12 months of approval. They are designed to:

- Ensure that all foster carers receive relevant induction, training and support, and continuing professional development.
- Assist managers and supervisors in assessing the skills, knowledge and experience of foster carers and in identifying their training and development needs.

The TSD Standards

The TSD Standards for Foster Care are underpinned by the Principles and Values Statement which applies to anyone who works with children and young people and The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

There are seven Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care.

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.

Why complete the Standards?

Fostering provides a vital service to many children who cannot live with their families. It can be demanding and challenging, yet thoroughly rewarding. Foster carers do an amazing job providing support and care to some of the most vulnerable children and young people. To do this effectively, they need knowledge and understanding of the care that children and young people need to achieve their full potential

The TSD Standards aim to provide foster carers with:

- A clearer understanding of their role.
- Greater confidence and clarity.
- An outline of essential knowledge and skills.
- Recognition for their developing professionalism.
- A pathway to further learning and development.

The Training Framework for Foster Carers

The TSD Standards support the Training Framework for Foster Care, which sets out the training and development pathways for foster carers at different stages of their fostering career: Pre-approval, Induction and Foster Carer Development (see appendix for an explanation of where the TSD Standards fit within this framework)

Timescales for implementation

All foster carers are expected to complete the *Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care* within 12 months of their approval.

All fostering service providers (local authorities and independent fostering agencies) are expected to implement the TSD Standards and to ensure that foster carers have access to pre-approval training, induction and continuing professional development.

The TSD Standards is a requirement within the revised *National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services* from April 2011.

Which foster carers do the TSD Standards apply to?

All foster carers approved under the Fostering Services Regulations¹ are expected to complete the TSD Standards. Variations to this are outlined below:

- **Joint carers:** Where two adults in a household are approved as foster carers, both carers must evidence that they meet the Standards (as stated in the revised NMS, Standard 20.1). However, some of this evidence may be joint. Where carers cannot provide joint evidence, each carer must provide their own individual evidence. In some cases, where the majority of the caring is done by one of the carers, some of the outcomes will not be relevant to the secondary carer. If this is the case, it is acceptable for the carers to write a comment in the evidence box which reflects this.
- **Family and friends (kinship) carers:** In recognition of their particular circumstances, family and friends foster carers, who are approved as foster carers, have an extended period of 18 months in which to evidence achievement of the TSD Standards.
- **Short break carers for children and young people with disabilities:** We have developed Training Support and Development Standards for Short Break Carers, that are relevant to the task of carers offering short breaks for children and young people who have a disability or complex health needs. For further information, see [TSD Standards for Short Break Carers](#)
- **Support carers and foster carers who provide short breaks (formerly known as respite carers):** Providers should determine their agency policy in relation to whether to use the TSD Standards for Foster Care or for Short Break Care with support carers and respite carers. We have produced some additional guidance to assist providers, which provides a framework for making the decision and shows which outcomes must be evidenced. The guidance can be downloaded [here](#)

The Workbook

The workbook is a tool to help foster carers plan, gather and record evidence of their learning and development. It takes you through each standard, gives a summary of what the standard covers and what you will be expected to know and be able to do to meet the standard's main areas and outcomes.

The workbook and associated Guidance factsheet is available from [here](#).

¹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/fostercare/a0071234/regs>
Guidance for Supervising Social Workers, Managers and Training Officers

Learning and Development Portfolio

All fostering services should ensure that foster carers have a portfolio in which to keep training certificates, training records and plans, annual review and supervision notes. Foster carers should be encouraged to add to their assessment and training portfolio (if they have one), rather than reproduce another portfolio. Encourage foster carers to keep important documents in their portfolio and to add to it each time they attend training or gain new knowledge.

As with the workbook, the portfolio should be maintained by, and retained by, the foster carer. If required, it can be used as evidence for additional qualifications such as the Level 3 Children and Young Peoples Workforce Diploma and to demonstrate learning and development achievements at the foster carer's annual review.

For further information and guidance on portfolios, see Guidance on Learning and Development Portfolios in the training toolkit.

Implementing the TSD Standards with your foster carers

There is a need to have a clear plan for implementation of the TSD Standards. Implementation is not optional. Ofsted have embedded the TSD Standards within their inspection framework and assess providers accordingly.

Experience so far indicates that initial planning and preparation of managers and supervising social workers is crucial. Ideally your plan should include priorities and key milestones in implementation. The plan should include a strategy for engaging:

- Supervising social workers in the delivery and assessment of the TSD Standards
- Carers with particular needs, e.g. those who work full-time outside the home.
- Those with literacy problems etc.
- Reluctant and/or resistant carers.
- Carers with previous training or experience.
- Family and friends (kinship) carers.

Be aware that you may identify the need for basic literacy skills' support and support for people whose first language isn't English. You may therefore need to plan some additional support for these carers. For further information and advice see Factsheet: ['Engaging all foster carers'](#)

It is important to brief the staff team and the best briefings include all those working with the TSD Standards i.e. foster carers, managers, service managers, supervising social workers and training officers. It is useful to involve all those with responsibility for implementation in discussions on 'how' to implement them in your service.

As a minimum, some initial briefing of supervising social workers and preparation for their role as assessor is essential. This is particularly important where these workers are not familiar with the principles and mechanics of assessment against Guidance for Supervising Social Workers, Managers and Training Officers

TSD Standards (e.g. in NVQs or practice learning).

What you can do to simplify the evidencing and assessment

- Familiarise yourself with the TSD Standards, main areas and outcomes. Knowing what these are will help you identify relevant evidence and assess at an appropriate level.
- Link assessment and training to outcomes. Make explicit the links between the assessment and training of carers, both pre-approval and post-approval, to the areas covered by the TSD Standards.
- Personal development plan or induction plans can be linked to the TSD Standards, and can help identify the skills and knowledge that a carer can already evidence, as well as gaps which can be planned for.
- Link the foster carers' annual review to the TSD Standards. Contributions from social workers and young people, reports and discussions can be used as evidence.
- Wherever possible use the day to day work of the carer with children and young people as evidence. Encourage carers to use their diary to reflect on what they have done, what worked, what didn't, what skills they used etc.
- Newly approved foster carers who have undertaken Skills to Foster or other skills based assessment may be familiar with gathering evidence for a portfolio. Encouraging foster carers to use this portfolio as a basis for their TSD Standards portfolio will help simplify the process.
- Facilitate carers to be creative, recognise their skills and use a format which they feel confident in using.
- Use existing documentation as a source of evidence e.g. diary sheets, supervision sheets, carers handbook or manual. Note: all documents should be anonymised or a summary of the document being referenced should be provided.
- Support groups. Either use existing support groups or set up a group specific specifically to support carers working on the TSD Standards.
- Use monthly supervision or support visit discussions about the children or young person in their care as an opportunity to link their practice to the TSD Standards.

What are you as a manager or supervising social worker² required to do?

Your role as a manager or supervising social worker is crucial. You need to make sure that you understand and can work according to the TSD Standards for Foster Care. Also that you can fulfil your obligations as set out in the *National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Regulations 2011*.

Supervising social workers need to be clear about their role. They are an important element in the process, and their role should not be underestimated. Supervising social workers are required to provide support to help foster carers

² We have used the term 'supervising social worker' through this guidance, but you may be more familiar with 'link worker', 'family placement social worker' or 'fostering support worker'

evidence the TSD Standards and to assess that they have successfully met the Standards. They should also act as a role model and champion the benefits of the TSD Standards.

Fostering managers have a responsibility to ensure that everyone who assesses foster carers has the skills and knowledge to carry out this role. If a supervising social worker identifies a support or training need that has not been resourced, it is important that it is raised quickly with the person/people who have the strategic lead for the TSD Standards.

Supporting foster carers to complete the TSD Standards and signing off evidence will take additional time. However, as supervising social workers become familiar with the standards and feel confident about signing off the standards, it should become an integral part of their role. Additional support might be required around assessing evidence for new supervising social workers.

It is important that everyone involved in assessing carers' workbooks has an understanding of what this involves. It is the foster carer's responsibility to present evidence to meet the standards and foster carers will differ in the amount of support they need from their supervising social worker. The assessor's role is to make a professional judgement as to whether the evidence provided meets the standard.

Fostering service providers (local authorities and independent fostering agencies) have a key role in ensuring that foster carers are:

- Equipped with the knowledge and skills to provide high quality care for the children and young people they look after.
- Provided with appropriate learning opportunities for professional development.
- Well supported and supervised.

They also have a statutory duty under Regulation 20 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 to provide training, advice, information and support to foster carers.

All fostering service providers are expected to implement the TSD Standards for Foster Care and ensure that foster carers have access to pre-approval training, induction and on-going professional learning and development.

Acknowledging achievement

Well supported foster carers are more likely to feel valued, have more successful placements and be more likely to remain as foster carers. Recognising carers' achievements can also provide motivation and an incentive to complete the TSD Standards.

For example, some fostering service providers have acknowledged the work that foster carers do by:

- Holding a celebration of achievement, at which foster carers were presented with their Certificates of Successful Completion.

- Encouraging and supporting carers who have completed the TSD Standards to become 'champions' or mentors to other foster carers.
- Linking completion of the TSD Standards to a Payment for Skills Scheme to enable foster carers to progress through the payment system.

What happens if carers cannot complete within the timescales?

A minority of foster carers may need longer than twelve months to complete the TSD Standards, particularly in the following situations:

- Exceptional and unexpected personal circumstances such as bereavement, ill health and personal crisis.
- Difficulties with foster carers' literacy/language skills.
- A significant period of time without a placement.
- Complex placement issues such as disruption or allegation.

This is acceptable, although it is good practice to re-negotiate a time frame for completing the standards in these situations. Check whether issues can be resolved by looking at different approaches. A proportionate and common sense approach should be considered where circumstances require it.

The requirement for all carers to complete the TSD Standards within 12 months of approval is written into the revised National Minimum Standards 2011, and form part of Ofsted inspections. It is important to keep a record of any issues of non-compliance.

The fostering service provider will need to determine agency policy where foster carers are unable or refuse to complete the TSD Standards. The exemplar overleaf demonstrated one providers approach. The fostering panel will need to consider whether continuing approval as a foster carer is appropriate. When doing so, both the impact of the failure to meet the TSD Standards, and of deregistration on the care of children and young people should be fully considered.

Exemplar: Dealing with non-completion

Staffordshire County Council has developed a 'deferment protocol'. Where a foster carer is unable to complete within the timescales, the following process is followed:

- Supervising social worker discusses circumstances with Team Manager.
- A report detailing the circumstances and a copy of the PDP is sent to the fostering services manager. The PDP includes proposals, actions and timescales for completion.
- Fostering services manager reviews proposal with supervising social worker/team manager and agrees a deferment of up to 6 months.
- Supervising social worker writes to foster carer outlining the terms of the deferment.

- Deferments that exceed six months are referred to the Fostering Panel following the second annual review, who will make recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker regarding the course of action to be taken.

Where deferment is required due to difficulties/concerns arising regarding the ability of the foster carer to achieve the required competency, a separate process is followed.

Useful links and resources

Organisations

The Fostering Network

This is the UK's leading charity for anyone with a personal or professional interest in fostering. The Fostering Network produces the Skills to Foster pre-approval training and assessment model, both of which are closely mapped to the Standards and provide evidence to meet many of the standards prior to approval. It also produces a wide range of publications, training and resources to support foster carers and fostering services, including key policy and recruitment materials. The Pathways in Fostering series of publications and training (including online training) are written for foster carers and are accompanied by question sheets which, when answered, provide evidence for the TSD Standards. www.fostering.net

British Association for Adoption and Fostering

This is a UK organisation made up of fostering and adoption agencies providing a range of books and other resources including training. It also publishes attractive books for children. BAAF administers the Independent Reviewing Mechanism (IRM) which can review decisions taken by fostering panels. www.baaf.org.uk

The Who Cares? Trust

The Trust promotes the interests of children and young people in care and produces many useful publications. www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk

Social Care Institute for Excellence

The institute provides up to date knowledge and summarises research and good practice in easy to read publications accessible on their website. There are some very good Practice Notes on what works in fostering. www.scie.org.uk

Useful resources

Policy and guidance

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, sets out the basic rights that every child should have. These rights underpin children's services in the UK.
www.unicef.org/crc

National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services and Fostering Regulations 2011 are the main regulations and standards relevant to foster care.
www.education.gov.uk/consultations/index.cfm?action=conResults&external=no&consultationId=1662&menu=3

Children and Young Persons Act 2008
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/23/contents

Family Rights Group is a charity that offers information and support to grandparents and other family members who are looking after children and to families who children need social care assistance. They also have a programme that focuses on family and friends carers
<http://www.frg.org.uk/involving-families/family-and-friends-carers>

Learning Together, learning from each other. This report examines how to involve hard to reach groups of foster carers, such as male foster carers and provides some useful tips and advice.
<http://www.fostering.net/all-about-fostering/resources/reports/learning-together-learning-each-other>

Information about the Level 3 Diploma.
<http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/>

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers: The Training Framework for Foster Care

Pre-approval	Post Approval		
<p>Pre-approval Training (Skills to Foster or similar programme)</p> <p>Skills based assessment (Skills to Foster Assessment model or similar)</p> <p>Identifying gaps in skills and knowledge and priority training needs</p> <p>6 months</p>	<p>Induction</p> <p>Personal development plan (within 6 weeks of approval)</p> <p>Initial induction (induction course or sessions with SSW)</p> <p>TSD Standards Workbook/Portfolio (sessions with SSW)</p> <p>Core training courses (e.g. attachment, safer caring, first aid etc)</p> <p>TSD Certificate of Successful Completion</p> <p>12 months</p>	<p>Foster Carer Development</p> <p>Review of Personal Development Plan (at Foster Carer Annual Review)</p> <p>Continuation of core training courses and skills development</p> <p>Portfolio</p> <p>Level 3 Diploma Children and Young People's Workforce (optional)</p> <p>12 months</p>	<p>C</p> <p>P</p> <p>D*</p>
30 Months			

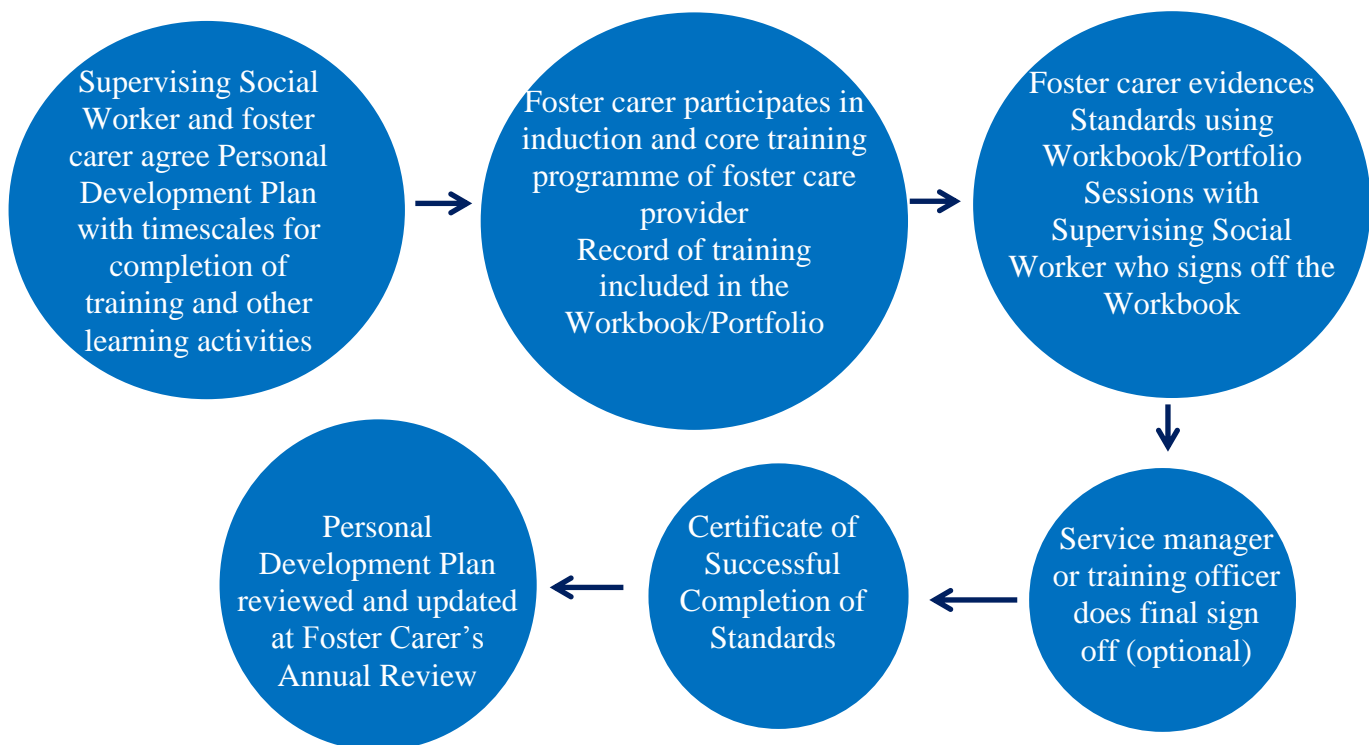
*CPD = Continuing Professional Development, with (optional) higher level qualifications

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care: Training pathway for a new foster carer

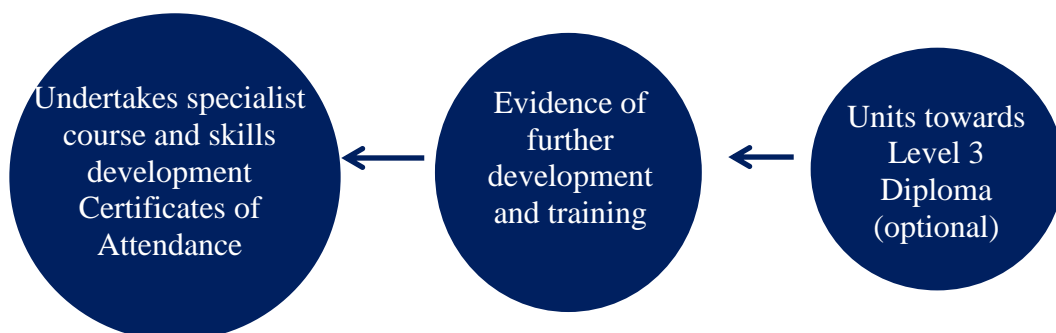
Pre-approval: 6 months



Induction: Within 12 months of approval



Foster Carer Development: Within 2 years of approval





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