



Department  
for Education

# **Short break carers**

**Supplementary guidance for  
managers, supervisors and trainers**

**Training, Support and Development  
Standards for Short Break Carers**

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**\*Based on templates provided by Norfolk County Council Children's  
Services Department**

## **Introduction**

**All people who work with children and young people are expected to provide high-quality and safe care for the children they look after, whatever their role.**

**The *Training, Support and Development Standards for Short Break Carers* were originally developed by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) in partnership with the Short Breaks Network. They were updated in July 2012.**

**Completion of the standards is a requirement for all short break carers who are approved under the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, as well as by other providers of short break care as part of their training and development.**

**Other new and existing short break carers are also strongly encouraged to complete the standards, as part of their induction, training and development.**

## The standards

The Training, Support and Development Standards for short break carers provide a structured approach to the assessment and training of approved short break foster carers. The standards cover their preparation and assessment and must be completed during the 12 months following their approval as foster carers or within 12 months of their taking up their role. They will help to ensure that approved foster carers are safe to take on the appropriate level of responsibility for the disabled children and young people in their care. They will assist supervisors and managers in assessing the skills, knowledge and experience of approved foster carers, and in identifying their training and development needs.

The standards are underpinned by the principles and values statement, which applies to anyone who works with children, and by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Completion of the Training Support and Development Standards is a requirement for approved short break foster carers. This is part of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services<sup>1</sup>. The standards may also be used with other new and existing short break carers as part of their training and development.

The standards build on the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care (launched in July 2007) and have been adapted to meet the needs of carers who offer short breaks to disabled children and young people and those with complex health needs.

These standards have a specific focus on disability and complex health needs and aim to be proportionate with the time commitment of the short break carer. The standards reflect the more limited caring role of a short break carer, where the parents or main carers retain primary responsibility for the child or young person's development, health, education and day-to-day decisions about their care.

The standards reflect the fact that short break carers:

- provide regular, but short periods of care on a part-time basis
- require specialist knowledge and skills for work with disabled children and young people
- work with children with complex health care, mobility and communication needs
- may be required to administer medication, follow clinical procedures or provide intimate care
- may be required to manage challenging behaviour

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00029-2011>

- are often in full-time employment outside the home
- often have relevant experience, qualifications and training
- look after children who live at home with their parents who have full-time involvement in their upbringing and education.

The standards set out clearly what short break carers should know, understand and be able to do, and are proportionate to the role and task of the short break carer.

This supplementary guidance should be used in conjunction with:

- the detailed guidance accompanying the standards for foster care – The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care: A Guide for Managers, Supervising Social Workers and Trainers, DfE, July 2012 (<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/fostercare/fostercarestand/b00203661/nationalstandardsforfostercarers>)
- the workbook especially adapted for short break carers – Short Break Carers Standards and Workbook, DfE July 2012  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/a0075231/short-breaks>
- Short Breaks - Advice to Local Authorities, 2011  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/a0075231/short-breaks>
- Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/707/made>

## Definitions

The term 'disabled children and young people' is used throughout the standards to refer to children or young people who may have physical, sensory or cognitive impairments that affect the way in which they relate to the world around them. Society creates many barriers which disable this group of children and young people and may prevent them from participating in a valued life. Many disabled children and young people will need varying amounts of support to ensure that they can interact with their environment and achieve the same outcomes as all children: to be healthy, to stay safe, to enjoy and achieve, to make a positive contribution and to achieve economic well-being.

An increasing number of disabled children also have complex health needs and require care which is invasive, or they may be dependent on 'technology' in order to maintain their optimum health (for example, children who are tube-fed, use ventilators or require procedures such as intermittent catheterisation). Some children with complex health needs may not have an impairment but will require support in order to access activities and community facilities.

*Definitions provided by Jeanne Carlin, Independent Disability Consultant*

## Aims of the standards

The standards are designed to:

- equip short break carers with the knowledge and skills needed to provide high-quality care for the children and young people in their care
- ensure that all short break carers are given the necessary help to develop knowledge and skills to carry out their role.

## Who do the standards apply to?

The standards must be completed by short break carers of disabled children and young people who are approved as foster carers under the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services Regulations.

New and existing short break carers who are approved as foster carers are expected to complete the standards and gain the Certificate of Successful Completion which is provided in the Short Break Carers Standards and Workbook.

Providers can exercise discretion as to whether they require foster carers who are within one year of retirement to complete the standards.

The carers listed below are not required to complete the standards but are encouraged to use them to develop their knowledge and skills with the support of their agency:

- carers providing short breaks under direct payments
- befrienders
- sitters
- carers providing flexible breaks in the child or young person's own home or within a local community setting.

All providers of short break services are expected to implement the standards and ensure that carers have access to training, induction and continuing development opportunities.

## **Who in the household should complete the standards?**

- Where the caring role is undertaken mainly by one person in the household, only the primary carer is required to complete the standards.
- Where the caring role is a shared responsibility (e.g. with the partner of the main carer or other family member), both should contribute to completing the workbook and participate in learning opportunities together.
- Only one workbook per household is required, but there may be circumstances where carers each opt to complete a separate workbook.

## **Time frame for successful completion of the standards**

- For approved short break foster carers, the outcomes in the standards should be met through planned learning within 12 months of approval.
- If the approved foster carer has not completed the standards within this period, the provider should both ensure that a plan is in place (setting out how the learning towards the standards can be achieved), and agree a revised timescale for completion.
- Providers have discretion to take into account the circumstances of individual foster carers (e.g. where there have been delays in linking a foster carer to a child, taking account of a carer's disability or illness) and to agree an extension.
- Approved foster carers whose first language is not English, or who have difficulty with literacy, may also require longer to complete the standards. Providers should offer support and assist carers to access support with language skills and literacy.

- Experienced short break foster carers who have had access to training and development will be able to use their experience in the role as evidence to 'fast track' through the standards.

## **Carers with related qualifications and experience**

- Short break foster carers who have experience in related fields (e.g. care work, nursing or education); have a relevant degree or diploma or have completed relevant NVQ units must still complete the standards, as they are tailored to the short break role. They can use their qualifications and experience as evidence against specific outcomes in the standards.
- Supervisors should note that carers may need to update their training or experience. If the prior learning or experience is over five years old, the carer will need to demonstrate to the supervisor that they have kept up to date and are likely to need refresher training.
- It is also important that the learning or experience is relevant to the role of the short break carer. For example, someone who works as a learning support assistant in a school and has undergone training there may need to show their supervisor how this prior learning applies to their current role.
- It is recommended that supervisors and carers identify relevant prior learning and experience that can be used to evidence specific outcomes during the initial assessment or in the induction plan.



# Streamlining, evidence-gathering and assessment

## Integrating the standards

- Implementation is likely to be most successful where short breaks services integrate the standards with existing processes for assessing, training, supervising and reviewing their carers. It is recommended that services make explicit the links between these standards and those processes (e.g. by mapping preparation training, assessment and initial and annual reviews to the standards).
- As an example, Form F (available on licence from the British Association of Adoption and Fostering) provides a template in section F for mapping to the Standards for Foster Care linked to the Personal Professional Development Plan. This helps identify the degree of attainment of each standard and proposed action to fill the gaps in knowledge or skills. The Fostering Network's Skills to Foster Programme provides around 60% of evidence for the standards.
- Short break carers (especially new carers) will need to use a variety of sources to assist their learning, including through training and support provided by the short breaks service. However, most evidence will be based on work that they are already doing as an integral part of their role so, in that sense, it is not additional work. Supervisors and mentors will play a key role in helping them to reflect on learning opportunities provided by naturally-occurring events.

## The workbook

The workbook for short break carers has been adapted to offer carers a streamlined process for presenting evidence that they have met the standards. Carers should complete the six sections (approximately six pages for each standard) by listing their evidence.

The sample questions and activities should be used to supplement the evidence provided to test the carer's knowledge and understanding, and to supplement your own observations of their practice. Carers do not have to provide answers to all of the questions. The questions can be adapted to reflect their role.

Where a carer has applied to be a short break carer for a specific child or young person, providers may tailor the induction to the priority needs of the child or young person.

The workbook is a flexible tool that allows carers to provide different volumes of evidence depending on their experience and confidence in presenting written material. Two exemplars of completed worksheets have been included in the back of the workbook to illustrate the breadth and depth of knowledge and skills expected, but these are not intended to be prescriptive of how carers should present their evidence.

Carers should be encouraged to keep their evidence (e.g. certificates from training courses, descriptions of their work and how it meets the standards, witness statements or testimonials, observation records, reflective accounts, reports they have written, extracts from recording etc.) in a ring binder portfolio.

The workbook can be filled in by:

- the carer on their own with the support of their supervisor, or
- jointly with the supervisor, or
- by the supervisor on behalf of the carer (where this happens, it should be noted that this has occurred).

Using mentors (e.g. experienced short break carers) to guide carers in completing the standards has been found to be a helpful approach. However, mentors are not able to sign off each standard. This should be done by a supervisor, trainer or person within the service with supervisory or management responsibility.

## A proportionate approach to assessment

- Detailed guidance on the delivery of training and development and assessing learning can be found in the Guide for Managers, Supervising Social Workers and Trainers and training toolkit accompanying the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers on the Department for Education's website at <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/fostercare/fostercarestand>.
- The assessment process designed for staff who work in Children's Services and for full-time foster carers may not be appropriate for short break carers who offer a more limited (but no less valuable) service.
- Time constraints on short break carers, many of whom have other employment and commitments to the children they care for, make it difficult for them to attend training or support groups, and supervision occurs less regularly. In addition, providers have more limited resources proportionately to commit to the learning and assessment process.
- The standards that have been developed for short break carers are at an induction or foundation level (i.e. they may require an awareness, or understanding, rather than an in-depth knowledge). As such, they do not require the same amount of evidence as, for example, an NVQ. The manager of the service who signs off all the completed workbooks and awards Certificates of Completion should ensure that there is sufficient evidence and, at the same time, highlight examples of over-assessment.

## **Ways of evidencing and assessing**

Experience from implementing the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards for Foster Care suggests that the following may help to simplify and streamline the process of gathering evidence and assessment:

### **Link assessment and training to outcomes**

The assessment process should make it possible for the carer to identify both their pre-existing knowledge and skills and their learning through the assessment process. Both preparation training and core post-approval training should be linked to the standards.

### **Personal development or induction plan**

A personal development or induction plan should be created post-approval, identifying gaps in knowledge and skills and the learning and development that the carer will need to undertake to evidence the standards. This plan should include details of the support that will be provided by the short breaks service.

### **The initial and annual review**

The carer's first review and subsequent review should be structured to provide evidence for the carer to meet the standards and provide an opportunity to review their progress in meeting the standards.

### **One-to-one induction sessions**

Arrange one-to-one induction sessions with new carers, and make sure you identify for the carer how they can use the areas covered in these sessions as evidence.

### **Support groups**

Use existing support groups to introduce the standards, and structure each group to provide evidence to meet the requirements of each standard. Set up a time-limited group specifically to support carers working on the standards.

### **Mentoring or buddying**

Pilot the standards with a small group of experienced carers who are enthusiastic and can then be recruited to assist other carers in a mentoring or buddying role.

### **Incentives**

Offer financial rewards for completing each standard, or on successful completion.

## **Naturally-occurring events**

Wherever possible, use the day-to-day work of the carer with children and young people, their parents and carers and relevant organisations as evidence. Encourage carers to use their diary to reflect on what they have done, what worked and did not work and why, and what skills they have used. Planning meetings or children and young people's reviews can also be a rich source of evidence.

## **Carer's handbook or manual**

Structure the carer's handbook in a way that reflects the standards so the carer can demonstrate their competence when they successfully implement guidance in line with the policies or procedures of the short breaks service.

## **Recording sheets**

Mark on recording sheets or in the carer's diary anything they can use as evidence.

## **Records of supervision**

Supervision notes can be used as evidence.

## **Use a range of methods**

Not all carers are comfortable with writing. Encourage them to present evidence in a range of ways (e.g. verbal reports, photographs or collages).

## **Online**

Support carers in being able to access the workbook online. Not all carers will be comfortable with this approach or have access to a computer.

## **At the right level**

Remember: the level required is induction or foundation level. Beware of assessing at too high a level.

## **Avoid over-assessment**

Do not over-assess. The assessor needs to be confident that the carer has the knowledge or skill and will apply it in their work.

## Templates

# Witness statement

for completion by **any person**

Name of short break carer:

Relevant standards (tick all that apply)

1. Role as short break carer	2. Safe environment, healthy care	3. Communicate effectively	4. Understand child development	5. Safeguarding	6. Develop yourself
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Context and date** (describe briefly)

**Carer's actions**

**Comments**

**Recommendations** (if any)

**Statement written by:**

**Role:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Carer's signature**

**Date:**

# Record of observation form

for completion by the **supervisor/mentor**

**Carer's name:**

**Date:**

<b>Setting:</b>	
<b>Who was involved?</b>	
<b>Activity:</b>	
<b>Interaction observed:</b>	

**Relevant standards (tick all that apply)**

1. Role as short break carer	2. Safe environment, healthy care	3. Communicate effectively	4. Understand child development	5. Safeguarding	6. Develop yourself
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Feedback to carer</b>	
<b>Comments from carer</b>	
<b>Action plan</b> (if required)	

**Signature of supervisor/mentor:**

**Role:**

**Carer's signature:**

**Date:**

# Evidence and reflection form

for completion by **carer**

Provides evidence of learning through reflective practice

**Carer's name:**

**Date:**

**Relevant standards (tick all that apply)**

1. Role as short break carer	2. Safe environment, healthy care	3. Communicate effectively	4. Understand child development	5. Safeguarding	6. Develop yourself
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**What was the situation?**

**What do I do?**

**What was the outcome** (What happened in response to what I did?)

**Reflection** (Why do I think the outcome happened? Did I intend it to happen in this way? Would I do something different next time? What have I learnt through this? Can I link what I did to previous learning and/or theory?)

*Continue over page if necessary*

**Carer's signature:**

**Date:**



# Evidence and reflection form

for completion by **carer**

**Reflection** *(continued)*

# **Training, Support and Development Standards for Short Break Carers**

## **Standard 1: Understand your role as a short break carer**

### **1.1 Principles and values for working with children and young people**

- a. Understand the principles and values essential for caring for children and young people.
- b. Demonstrate how your care will support children and young people to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

### **1.2 Equality, inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice**

- a. Know about the different types of prejudice and discrimination which can affect children and young people.
- b. Understand why it is important to provide care which respects and preserves each child or young person's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background, and sexual orientation.
- c. Understand the social model of disability and how society creates barriers to inclusion for disabled people. Demonstrate a positive attitude towards impairment and a willingness to challenge discrimination.
- d. Show how you might respond to discrimination directed at a disabled child or young person.

### **1.3 The role of the short break carer**

- a. Understand your role as a short break carer and to whom you are responsible.
- b. Understand your role as part of the short break service working with the child or young person, and how you contribute to their development.
- c. Be able to work in partnership with families and understand the pressures of caring for a disabled child or young person.
- d. Be able to work in partnership with staff from the other organisations that support the child or young person and their family.

## **1.4 Policies, procedures and good practice for the short break role**

- a. Understand how to apply your agency's policies, procedures and good practice relevant to short break carers.
- b. Understand the importance of confidentiality and how it applies in your work.
- c. Know how to make a complaint on your own behalf or on behalf of the children and young people you care for.

## **Standard 2: Provide a safe environment and healthy care**

### **2.1 Health and safety**

- a. Know your responsibilities under your agency's procedures for the health and safety of children and young people in your care.
- b. Demonstrate how you keep your home safe, secure and free of avoidable hazards, and that you maintain a good standard of hygiene and cleanliness.
- c. Know what to do in case of a fire.

### **2.2 Healthy care, medication and clinical procedures**

- a. Understand what 'healthy care' means for the physical, mental, emotional and sexual health of children and young people.
- b. Be aware of the child or young person's health-care needs and the implications for their care (including hygiene needs, allergies, and infection-control procedures).
- c. Be aware of the child or young person's moving and handling plan, and the implications for their care (if applicable).
- d. Successfully undertake specific training in clinical procedures and carry them out in accordance with the training (if required).
- e. Know how to administer medication safely, implement health-care plans, and understand the importance of obtaining consent; and know in what circumstances to contact those with parental responsibility.
- f. Know how to use equipment and aids safely and be willing to undertake any relevant training.
- g. Know how to carry out basic first aid, and when and how to access emergency medical treatment.
- h. Know what records to keep of a child's health and administration of medication, in line with agency procedures and medical advice.

## **2.3 Personal care**

- a. Be able to provide personal and intimate care, in line with agency guidelines, which respects the rights of children and young people to privacy, respect and dignity, and encourages their independence.
- b. Be able to provide care which is responsive to the specific needs and impairments of the children and young people you look after and respects their right to make choices.

## **2.4 Personal safety and managing risk**

- a. Understand potential risks to the safety of yourself and your family and know what you can do to reduce and manage the risks.
- b. Be aware of the range of challenging behaviours which may be presented by children and young people, and know how to manage challenging behaviour in a way that is both safe and respectful while in accordance with the child or young person's behaviour management plan, where one exists.
- c. Identify examples of risks to the personal safety of children and young people, and know how to access information and training, and the appropriate action to be taken to reduce the risk.

# **Standard 3: Communicate effectively**

## **3.1 Communicating with children and young people**

- a. Use and be willing to undergo training in the child or young person's preferred method of communication, and demonstrate that you respond appropriately.
- b. Show how you enable disabled children to make their own decisions and exercise choice.
- c. Demonstrate an ability to advocate on behalf of disabled children and young people.

## **3.2 Communicating with parents/carers and organisations**

- a. Be able to communicate effectively with parents and carers and raise any concerns in an appropriate way.
- b. Be able to communicate effectively with other organisations which are involved with disabled children and young people.
- c. Be able to communicate effectively with your supervisor.

### **3.3 Record-keeping**

- a. Be able to keep accurate written records in line with your agency's requirements and to use a variety of materials to record progress and achievements in line with the Every Disabled Child Matters outcomes.
- b. Be able to gather and record the child or young person's views and feelings about their short breaks placement, in line with their chosen method of communication.

## **Standard 4: Understand the development of children and young people**

### **4.1 Child and adolescent development**

- a. Demonstrate a basic understanding of child and adolescent development, and the developmental needs of children and young people.
- b. Understand the difference between chronological age and stages of development, and how this may affect a disabled child or young person.
- c. Be able to work with disabled children and young people in developing independence, self-confidence, resilience and self-esteem.
- d. Understand the importance of transitions in the life of disabled children and young people, and your contribution to the transition process.

### **4.2 Needs of disabled children and young people, and those with complex health needs**

- a. Know how to promote the child or young person's independence (as far as is possible) in all aspects of their life.
- b. Know how to encourage disabled children and young people's participation and inclusion in play, activities and learning.
- c. Show that you provide age-appropriate activities and experiences both within and outside of the home to take account of the child or young person's disability.
- d. Be aware of the importance of providing safe and predictable routines for disabled children and young people.
- e. Understand how to enable disabled children and young people to develop a positive sexual identity regarding their own sexuality.

## **Standard 5: Keep children and young people safe from harm**

### **5.1 Safeguarding policies and procedures**

- a. Be aware of your local multi-agency safeguarding policies and procedures on identifying and protecting children and young people who have been abused or are at risk of abuse.
- b. Know your responsibilities as a short break carer for protecting and safeguarding children, and how to follow your agency's procedures on reporting concerns on child protection issues.

### **5.2 Keeping children safe**

- a. Be able to create a safe environment for children and young people.
- b. Know how to help children and young people keep themselves safe from harm or abuse.
- c. Develop, maintain and implement 'safer caring' guidelines for you and your household, and provide care that minimises the risk of allegations.

### **5.3 Recognising and responding to abuse**

- a. Understand the different ways in which children and young people can be harmed, with particular regard to factors that make disabled children and young people more vulnerable to abuse. Different types of abuse are:
  - physical abuse
  - emotional abuse
  - neglect
  - institutional abuse
  - sexual abuse
  - exposure to domestic violence
  - faltering growth/failure to thrive
  - self-harm
  - the internet.
- b. Know about the signs and indicators of possible abuse and neglect and how these relate to disabled children and young people.

- c. Understand how disabled children and young people might be bullied and know what action to take if you suspect a child is being bullied.
- d. Know what action to take if you suspect a child or young person is being abused or neglected and when immediate action may be necessary to ensure their safety.

#### **5.4 Whistle-blowing (reporting failures in duty)**

- a. Know your agency's policies and procedures on reporting concerns on safeguarding issues, and unsafe practice of others, and what to do if you do not get a satisfactory response from your own or other organisations.

### **Standard 6: Develop yourself**

#### **6.1 Using support and supervision to develop your role as a short break carer**

- a. Understand the purpose of your personal supervision and how to make the best use of it.
- b. Know what support is available to you and the importance of asking for help and advice.

#### **6.2 Personal development**

- a. Be willing to take advantage of training and development opportunities to develop your knowledge and skills further.

## Your notes





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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at the Pathfinders and Short Breaks Team, Special Education Needs and Disability Division, Department for Education, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

This document is also available from our website at <http://www.education.gov.uk>.