

Foster Carer Continuing Development Tool Pilot

Foster carers play a crucially important role in supporting some of society's most vulnerable children and young people; it is vital that foster carers are supported to learn and develop their skills, both in order to meet the needs of children and to promote the professional development of foster carers.

The National Minimum Standards states that foster carers should maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by their fostering service. They also state that foster carers' personal development plans set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. <http://tinyurl.com/national-minimum-standards>

This tool has been created to support the sector to meet this requirement. It is a practical tool to help foster carers and social workers identify foster carers' learning needs and discuss how they can be best met.

It is in pilot form and is being trialled in Spring/Summer 2013. We hope to gather feedback and further develop it later in the year.

You can record your thinking on the next page. The back page will help you determine your preferred learning style and identify the most effective development activities for you.

This tool aims to do the following:

- > support foster carers and their social workers to discuss and plan for foster carers' learning needs
- > help get the most out of the learning foster carers do by helping to identify foster carer learning styles which can then be matched to the most appropriate learning activity
- > provide a way of considering the effectiveness/impact of the learning on the carer and the children in their care

It is not a mandatory tool, nor is taking part in this trial compulsory – however, we are very keen to gather feedback from social workers and foster carers so that we can develop the most useful tool possible and amend the tool to best suit their local circumstances.

We would also welcome seeing other examples of the tools used by the sector to support foster carers in their learning.

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Reason	Type	Date	Development activity	Key learning points	Impact on self and others	Supervising Social Worker comments	To help me put my learning into practice, I will need...
Why did I do/want to do this learning e.g. was it identified as a development need?	Type of activity (see key below)	When did I do this? (Single date or date range)	What did I do? Title of training course / description of activity, e.g. leading a skills to foster session.	What did I get out of it? e.g. develop an understanding of the reasons for challenging behaviour and strategies for dealing with it. Has further learning been identified?	How has it benefited how I foster? e.g. the training has given me a better understanding of child behaviour and I now approach challenging behaviour differently, bedtimes are easier. How has it benefited the children in my care/relationship with birth family/own family/relationship with team around the child (if applicable)? e.g. attendance at school has improved.	Has the development activity had an impact on practice?	What do I need to ensure I receive ongoing training and development that is appropriate to my needs? e.g. course/description of training.

Pilot Tool

SIGNED

Foster carer	Date	Supervising Social Worker	Date

TYPE KEY: R=Required; O=Optional; A=Advanced; NMS=National Minimum Standards

Learning styles

Individuals learn in different ways, so it is important to understand how you prefer to learn in order to identify and access the most effective learning opportunities for you. There are several questionnaires that can help you with this. Many are freely available and simple to use, such as <http://tinyurl.com/vark-learn>



Visual Preferences

- > pictures, posters, slides
- > flow charts
- > underlining, different colours, highlighters
- > diagrams and pictures
- > graphs
- > symbols
- > white space



Auditory Preferences

- > discussions
- > tutorials
- > descriptions of pictures and other visuals
- > to hear descriptions and explanations of text rather than reading it
- > interesting examples and stories to remember



Read/Write Preferences

- > lists
- > headings
- > glossaries and definitions
- > handouts
- > multiple choice questions
- > writing information themselves



Kinesthetic Preferences

- > exercises, activities and tasks
- > case studies
- > role play/testing out
- > reflection on personal experience
- > focus on what this means in practice
- > ideas are only valuable if they sound practical, real and relevant

My preferred learning style is:

For more information about this tool contact: FosterCare.CIC@education.gsi.gov.uk

www.rip.org.uk

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