

Foster Carer Continuing Development Tool Pilot



Frequently Asked Questions

> What's the aim of the pilot tool?

research in practice has collaborated with the Fostering Team at the Department for Education (DfE) to develop the tool with the aim of helping foster carers and social workers to identify foster carers' learning needs and discuss how they can be best met. We have created a tool in pilot form and we are asking colleagues to test it out over the next few months. The intention at this stage is to produce a revised version of this tool later in the year, so gathering feedback is key.

> Why are research in practice involved?

Because we are interested in learning and development, and have a good track record of involving the sector in the design and testing of tools and materials. We heard about the work that DfE were doing and offered to help by introducing some underpinning evidence to the tool, by designing it and by running this trial. We have not received any funding for this project – we are involved purely because we are passionate about promoting learning for all those supporting children, and because we were keen to involve social workers and foster carers in this work. We may or may not be involved in creating a revised version of this tool, it is yet to be discussed.

> Is taking part compulsory?

It should be stressed that this tool is not mandatory and nor is taking part in this trial compulsory. However, we are very keen to gather feedback from social workers and foster carers so that DfE can develop the most useful tool possible.

> Who will be piloting the tool?

We are circulating the tool to over ninety local authorities and of course to TACT, NSPCC and Action for Children who are all Partners of research in practice. We are also very pleased to be involving other Independent Fostering Providers in the trial.

> What are the start and end dates for the pilot?

The pilot started in the first half of April and we are asking colleagues to use the tool until early / mid July.

> What is the actual time period for the pilot?

As above. We will be sending out a questionnaire in late July.

> That's not much time – there might not be much training on for foster carers during these couple of months. How can I manage that?

DfE have confirmed that we can extend the trial for a couple of weeks, so we will issue the survey later in July. We recognise (and have discussed with DfE colleagues) that the short time period would bring some limitations. However, this is not intended to be an extensive formal pilot but, rather, a small scale testing phase to explore what is useful / could be improved in a tool like this.

We agree that, to an extent, findings will be limited by what training was available to foster carers. However, would also add two points:

- One of the things we are exploring is whether this tool helps practitioners and carers to have an effective dialogue about learning needs, not just the training itself.
- We hope the tool (by using the learning styles questionnaire on the back) will help colleagues to identify different kinds of learning activity beyond formal training.

> **The Tool references the National Minimum Standards (NMS) but not the Foster Carers Training, Support and Development Standards – what does this mean?**

It's the NMS that specifically requires foster carers maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them by the fostering service and to have personal development plans which set out how they will be supported to undertake ongoing training and development that is appropriate to their development needs and experience. The TSD standards are primarily now for new carers as most carers should have completed them. DfE colleagues confirm that this tool does not conflict with what you are required to do under both the NMS and TSD.

> **What are you asking for in the feedback – is there a questionnaire?**

Yes, we will use a 'SurveyMonkey' questionnaire. This will be sent to the main contact we have for each authority or organisation and we will be gathering details of those colleagues who have used the tool and sending them the questionnaire. The survey will be short and easy to complete.

> **So, will I have to complete the survey? I don't work with foster carers directly, I just received the tool.**

We want to send the survey to the people who actually trialled the tool with foster carers – so *please* keep a note of who you passed the tool onto. We will contact you / the main contact in your agency who requested to take part to get their details soon. So please don't just leave a stack of the Pilot Tools near the coffee machine and hope colleagues will trial it – it will make it very hard to gather feedback!

> **Will our feedback be passed on to DfE?**

We will collate all feedback and it will be anonymised – so there is no need to be concerned about being identified from your feedback. The feedback will be used to inform future planning; it is hoped that a revised version of this tool will be produced later in the year and we and DfE are really committed to ensuring the sector has had a chance to input to that. So, yes, your feedback will absolutely be passed on – but in a way that means you and your agency will not be identifiable.

> **Who is going to collate the completed tools?**

We are not asking you to return the completed tools – they are for the practitioners and foster carers. What we are interested in is how people experienced the tool, which bits were useful, what would make it a more useful tool, etc.

> **Is there any flexibility with the July feedback?**

We are pleased to confirm that DfE have agreed we can issue the questionnaire in late July.

> **We already have our own tools for this. Do I have to switch to this tool?**

As above, this trial is not compulsory. We know that there are many excellent tools and techniques already being used by colleagues working with foster carers. When we issue the feedback survey we will be asking about any tools you currently use.

> **Can we have more copies please?**

You can request more copies from resources@rip.org.uk we will run out quite quickly though so ask sooner rather than later.

> **Can I access the Pilot Tool electronically?**

You can find it on the **research in practice** website: www.rip.org.uk/foster-carer-tool

> **Who should I contact if I have any other questions?**

If you have any questions or queries about the tool please contact:

resources@rip.org.uk

FosterCare.CIC@education.gsi.gov.uk