

Assessment of Prospective Foster Carers and the Foster Carer Payment for Skills (PFS) Model and the Tasks, Skills, Competencies (TSC) Framework

Introduction

The Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Fostering Service employs a four level Payment For Skills (PFS) model with the addition of a Kinship Carers level for family and friends foster carers. The model underpins the Fostering Service commitment to achieving best possible outcomes for fostered looked after children supported by skilled, motivated and rewarded foster carers. The model provides clear entry requirements and post approval expectations for each level, including training and development and support group attendance. The Tasks, Skills and Competencies (TSC) carer practice framework for each level of the model encompasses the 5 Outcomes of the “Every Child Matters” framework.

Entry Level Competencies

For the recruitment of new foster carers to levels higher than Level 1 the skills and competencies stated within this document will need to be evidenced within the Skills to Foster Assessment. Social Workers will be expected to support applicants to evidence these skills through their previous work or personal experiences, presentation during the assessment process and assessment work. Specific examples should be provided which demonstrate that the applicant already has the skill required, or that there is evidence that they would be able to very quickly obtain this once actually fostering. It is expected that the majority of new applicants would be approved at Level 1 but that the recruitment of foster carers to higher skills levels is possible in order to take account of specific relevant and specialist experience prior to fostering or of foster carers transferring from other agencies who already have fostering experience. If applicants are approved and enter into fostering at a higher skills level, they will be required, within specified timescales, to complete the mandatory training courses for all lower levels. These can be found within the Post-Approval PFS and TSC Framework.

Post Approval Progression

Following approval, in order to progress to a higher level the Supervising Social Worker will complete the appropriate level progression form which will include the views of the carer and the evidence required to meet the next level of skills. (See post-approval PFS and TSC Framework)

If concerns are raised that the carer is not meeting the requirements of the skills level that they are currently at, this will be discussed during the foster carers' review during which it will be specified what the foster carer needs to do to remain at their current skills level. There will then be a 6 month period during which the carer will be required to achieve these actions. If these are not achieved within the 6 months, the foster carers skills level will be reduced. It is therefore imperative that rigour and caution are applied in the assessment of skills level prior to approval in order to ensure that applicants entering at a higher skills level will be able to maintain the skills required.

Overview of the Model:

(Weekly Fee structure 2019/20)

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| Kinship Carers Entry Requirements: Financial Support | Positive kinship carers assessment with approval at Fostering Panel and ADM and completion of Skills to Foster training 1. Weekly Child Allowances + Birthday, Cultural Celebrations & Holiday monies 2. No Fee |
| Level 1 Entry Requirements: Financial Support: | Have some experience of childcare e.g. parenting / looking after other's children 1. Weekly Child Allowances + Birthday, Cultural Celebrations & Holiday monies when applicable 2. 1st & 2nd Placement Fee: £100 Subsequent Placements: £50 |
| Level 2 Entry Requirements: Financial Support: | Have experience of childcare e.g. parenting / looking after other's children / paid or voluntary work in childcare / previous fostering experience (six months minimum) 1. Weekly Child Allowances + Birthday, Cultural Celebrations & Holiday monies when applicable 2. 1st & 2nd Placement Fee: £125 Subsequent Placements: £62.50 |

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| <p>Level 3</p> <p>Entry Requirements:</p> <p>Financial Support:</p> | <p>In addition to Level 2, evidence significant childcare experience, experience of working with other professionals to meet the needs of children, and ability to take more challenging children with more complex needs.</p> <p><i>N.B. Rotherham's IFA transfer offer states that IFA carers transferring to RMBC would enter at Level 3 if they do not currently have an RMBC child in placement.</i></p> <p>1. Weekly Child Allowances + Birthday, Cultural Celebrations & Holiday monies when applicable 2. 1st & 2nd Placement Fee: £175 Subsequent Placements: £87.50</p> |
| <p>Level 4</p> <p>Entry Requirements:</p> <p>Financial Support:</p> | <p>Significant formal childcare experience e.g. previous fostering 1 year minimum inc. caring for children with complex needs /employment in childcare or related experience e.g. nursing, youth work, learning mentor. Ability to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the fostering task.</p> <p>1. Weekly Child Allowances + Birthday, Cultural Celebrations & Holiday monies when applicable 2. 1st & 2nd Placement Fee: £360 Subsequent Placements: £180</p> |

Level 1

Entry requirements: Have some experience of childcare e.g. parenting / looking after other's children

Practice requirements:

Prospective foster carers need to be able to evidence that they meet the requirements below.

Be Healthy

Level 1

- Have provide a good standard of care for their own children or other people's children (e.g. family/friend's children) in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment
- Show insight into how to ensure the health and safety of children/young people within the home including completion of the Health and Safety checklist
- Show understanding of the importance of maintain appropriate placement records post approval, including the maintenance of a Foster Carer Logs and the recording of significant events with appropriate reporting.
- Demonstrate evidence that they will be able to help and encourage children to be physically and mentally healthy via healthy diet, lifestyle, regular exercise, opportunities to talk about feelings and by cultivating children's sense of their own agency.
- Demonstrate the willingness and potential to learn and put into practice therapeutic parenting approaches and an understanding their importance.
- Understand the need to attend medical and dental appointments with the child/young person and to facilitate the fostered child/young person to receive health care which meets their needs for good physical, emotional and social development
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to encourage awareness and understanding of drug and alcohol issues and positively promote the development of good sexual health
- Demonstrate willingness to promote and support contact for a fostered child/young person
- Provide evidence of ability act as advocate for a child/young person in cooperation with other professionals/agencies e.g. school/education/health/police

Stay Safe

Level 1

- Be able to explain how you would protect or provide evidence of protecting children/young people from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation
- Be able to explain how you would set or provide evidence of setting appropriate boundaries and managing children's behaviour within these without recourse to physical chastisement. Show willingness to discuss and clarify boundaries in conjunction with others e.g. child's social worker; supervising social worker
- Provide suitable accommodation for the number, needs and age of the child/young person within the terms of approval proposed.
- Provide evidence of how a safe, stimulating and stable environment would be provided to the varied needs of individual children/young people taking into account their backgrounds and experiences
- Understand the importance of maintaining a safe care plan for each child/young person in placement
- Show evidence that supervision and guidance from a supervising social worker will positively utilised and the ability to reflect on and learn from advice given
- Show willingness to attend and contribute to foster carer reviews, self-assessment and reflective learning opportunities
- Show willingness to attend and contribute to Looked After Child reviews and an understanding of what these are for and why they are important

Enjoy and Achieve

Level 1

- Evidence how foster care which values and promotes diversity and equality will be provided
- Demonstrate ability to listen to and communicate with children/young people appropriate to their age, understanding, individual needs and ethnicity and culture
- Understand the importance of and demonstrate willingness to actively promote, support and encourage children's/young people's education and achievement under the guidance of a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Demonstrate willingness to attend and contribute to PEP Reviews
- Evidence the potential to establish and maintain daily routines for children /young people e.g. school attendance, assisting with homework
- Demonstrate how the development of children's/young people's self-esteem and positive identity would be assisted and encouraged by supporting participation in social activities and leisure pursuits

- Demonstrate willingness to play an active role in relationships with education providers e.g. attending school parents' evenings, contributing/commenting on school reports/supporting school – home agreements
- Demonstrate willingness to transport to and from the child/ren's education provision unless there are extenuating circumstances as to why they cannot provide this transport.
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to assist children/young people moving to other placements when required and as part of a child's placement plan e.g. return to birth family; to other foster placement; to adoption placement

Make a Positive Contribution

Level 1

- Demonstrate the skills to help children/young people cope with issues of separation and loss and assist them with coming to terms with previous experiences or the ability to quickly learn these skills where they are more specialist (e.g. therapeutic approaches).
- Demonstrate how assistance would be provided to children/young people to maintain a positive view of their family and support and facilitate contact as agreed in a placement plan
- Demonstrate willingness to liaise closely with a child's social worker and work to agreed plans for the child/young person and their understanding of their role as a foster carer in decision making for the child
- Demonstrate the ability to maintain confidentiality
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to work closely with other professionals in the best interest of the child/young person e.g. school; education; health; therapeutic services
- Demonstrate a commitment to sustaining a placement as agreed in the child's care plan
- Demonstrate a commitment to ending placements in a planned, agreed way

Achieve Economic Well Being

Level 1

- Demonstrate willingness and ability to assist children/young people moving to other placements when required and as part of a child's placement plan e.g. return to birth family; to other foster placement; to adoption placement
- Demonstrate willingness to attend and contribute to LAC reviews and other meetings/forums as agreed and identified in a child's care/placement plan

- Maintain a nurturing home environment that will model family living and provide good standards to positively influence a child's/young person's aspirations
- Demonstrate the ability to promote and encourage the development of independence/life skills where age appropriate
- Demonstrate the ability to assist young people to develop skills, confidence and knowledge necessary for successful adult living

Level 2

Entry requirement: Have experience of childcare e.g. parenting/looking after other's children/paid or voluntary work in childcare/previous fostering experience (six months minimum)

Practice requirements:

Prospective foster carers need to be able to evidence that they meet the requirements below.

Be Healthy

Level 2 (in addition to Level 1)

- Demonstrate the ability to provide good, quality care to meet the needs of a child/young person
- Show a commitment to developing greater understanding of the range of childcare and child development issues
- Demonstrate a willingness to utilise basic therapeutic parenting techniques under the guidance of social workers/other professionals and demonstrate a basic understanding of such techniques throughout the assessment process.
- Demonstrate ability and willingness to promote, support and supervise family time (contact), including in the foster carers own home where appropriate and agreed
- Demonstrate willingness to assist with Life Story work for children in placement.

Stay Safe

Level 2 (in addition to Level 1)

- Evidence skills development required to meet the needs of more complex and demanding children/young people
- Demonstrate competency through transferable skills from other work/experience to be able to contribute to professional assessments under the guidance of the child's social worker, supervising social worker or other professionals

Enjoy and Achieve

Level 2 (in addition to Level 1)

- Demonstrate ability and willingness to make proactive contributions to problem resolution in school for children/young people placed

Make a Positive Contribution

Level 2 (in addition to Level 1)

- Demonstrate ability to maintain accurate placement records and provide written reports as required
- Attend Court proceedings involving placed children/young people where required
- Demonstrate the skills and understanding required to actively support work with birth parents/extended family where appropriate

Achieve Economic Well Being

Level 2 (in addition to Level 1)

- Actively promote the value of engaging in local activities and community links for placed children and young people where age appropriate

Level 3

Entry requirement: Evidence significant childcare experience e.g. parenting/looking after other's children/paid or voluntary work in childcare/previous fostering experience (at least 2 years), experience of working with other professionals to meet the needs of children and ability to take more challenging children with more complex needs.

Practice requirements:

Prospective foster carers need to be able to evidence that they meet the requirements below.

Be Healthy

Level 3 (in addition to Levels 1 and 2)

- Ability and capacity to maintain active involvement with and provide information to appropriate specialist health services to meet the needs of placed children / young people e.g. therapeutic services. Provide mentor support / advice to other carers in these areas
- Evidence through assessment of a natural therapeutic approach to practice and willingness to quickly learn and then confidently implement therapeutic parenting techniques as a significant part of day to day parenting practice with ongoing support and guidance from Social Workers and other professionals.

Stay Safe

Level 3 (in addition to Levels 1 and 2)

- Demonstrate ability to assist with plans / agreements for children / young people as required. Evidence that they will be able to work to agreements and contracts to achieve placement plans and related outcomes.
- Demonstrate the knowledge and experience to be able to contribute to professional assessments of children / young people
- Evidence ability to manage more challenging and demanding behaviours and support more specialised placement commitments
- A commitment via supervision to identify own training and development needs
- Be able to offer significant flexibility in meeting the placement needs of more complex children / young people
- Evidence willingness and skills to work cooperatively and supportively with birth family / relatives where considered appropriate

Enjoy and Achieve

Level 3 (in addition to Levels 1 and 2)

- Demonstrate a commitment to improving knowledge and understanding of specific educational issues in order to assist child / young person placed

Make a Positive Contribution

Level 3 (in addition to Levels 1 and 2)

- Show willingness and capability to develop skills and ability to work closely with birth parents / extended family in order to achieve placement plans

Achieve Economic Well Being

Level 3 (in addition to Levels 1 and 2)

- Evidence ability from prior experience to provide detailed reports as required and contribute to a wide range of meetings / forums
- Evidence ability to encourage and support young people (where age appropriate) to access work experience / part time work and promote their knowledge, confidence and understanding of work related issues e.g. compiling CV's / application forms

Level 4

Entry requirement: Significant formal childcare experience e.g. previous fostering 1 years minimum including caring for children with complex needs / employment in childcare or related experience e.g. nursing, youth work, learning mentor. Ability to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the fostering task.

General requirements: Must be able to provide specialist foster care in one or more key areas e.g.:

- Parent & child / Assessment
- Children with disability that results in the need for very specialist care
- Children having experienced significant disruption / placement breakdowns
- Teens / Placements linked to the Youth Justice system
- Emergency Placements for challenging children and young people
- Placements for children who have experienced current or historical school exclusions
- Placements for children where there is evidence of abuse to self or others
- Placements for children where there is evidence of drug and alcohol abuse/dependency
- Placements for young people with particularly challenging behaviours (e.g. displaying physical and/or verbal aggression) where the only alternative placement would be a high cost independent sector placement

Will be prioritised for Emergency, Task and Bridging placements as opposed to respite unless in extreme circumstances. Placements usually for children aged 8-17 (with the exception of parent & child).

Must be able to:

1. Be available for the child on a fulltime basis unless otherwise agreed as part of the matching process for a specific child/ young person
2. Attend appropriate support group 6 times annually and attend all foster carer forums
3. Be available to buddy up with less experienced foster carers to assist and mentor them in their learning and practice
4. Show a commitment to being engaged in the fostering community and support and assist the Fostering Service in promoting a positive fostering profile by being present at foster carer activities and recruitment events
5. Consider / participate in delivery of new carer preparation and training in partnership with Fostering Staff

Practice requirements:

Prospective foster carers need to be able to evidence that they meet the requirements below.

Be Healthy

Level 4 (in addition to Levels 1, 2 and 3)

- Evidence from previous work/personal experience that they would be able to achieve sustained high level work with specialist health services for children young people, including direct work with the child / young person in placement
- Be willing and able to transport to and supervise contact arrangements and provide detailed analysis and assessment of contact arrangements inside (where appropriate) and outside the foster home
- Evidence that they would be able to provide records and reports of a high quality and detail that can inform the development of child care planning

Stay Safe

Level 4 (in addition to Levels 1, 2 and 3)

- Willingness and skills to provide commitment to specialised placements of children / young people with the most complex needs.
- Willingness and skills to provide of emergency placements (inc. Out of Hours) and those required at short notice
- Demonstrate through previous experience their ability to manage persistently challenging and anti-social behaviours of children / young people placed including the use of more specialist therapeutic approaches with the support of professionals.

Enjoy and Achieve

Level 4 (in addition to Levels 1, 2 and 3)

- Demonstrate ability to provide a high level of input (verbal and written) to the range of required tasks involved in encouraging children / young people to enjoy and achieve
- Demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding of educational and child development issues

Make a Positive Contribution

Level 4 (in addition to Levels 1, 2 and 3)

- Identify own training and development needs and keep up date and informed about child development issues applying this knowledge to your work
- Ability to provide comprehensive assessments of children's needs
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to, in consultation with a supervising social worker and child's social worker, take a high level of responsibility for identifying and using support services available for the child / young person and to develop own knowledge and understanding of these services

Achieve Economic Well Being

Level 4 (in addition to Levels 1,2 and 3)

- Demonstrate willingness, skills and ability to actively support and encourage young people to engage in further education / training / employment opportunities
- Demonstrate willingness, skills and ability to play a pro-active role, in close liaison with other professionals in supporting a young person's transition to new experiences and adult life