



Somerset
Council

Foster Carer New Learning, Development, and Training Plan.

Dear Carer,

Following a review of learning and development in consultation from foster carers, the Fostering Service, and in partnership with IMPOWER, a revised programme is being implemented. We recognise that the mandatory learning and development (L&D) offer in the past has not always been relevant to individual foster carers or children and young people. We have refreshed our programme to provide a more tailored offer for our foster carers.

As a result, the core mandatory training that all foster carers are required to complete has been re-evaluated to focus on core areas that all foster carers will receive. We have developed a further programme of recommended opportunities and pathways relating more specifically to the children and young people you care for, rather than a focus on specific mandatory training which might not be relevant for you.

These new arrangements come into place from Monday **2nd October 2023**.

What does this mean for me?

Your Supervising Social Worker will work with you to review and agree the learning and development that is right for you including any training you are already booked on (over and above the mandatory training).

The CFLD Team will be inviting foster carers to regular Team's meetings to ensure we continue to discuss and jointly design learning and development improvements with you. Please speak with your Supervising Social Worker (SSW) if you have any questions and comments about these changes.

Could we also take this opportunity to also thank you for your continued commitment to the children in your care.

Matt Randles (*Strategic Operations Manager, Fostering in Somerset*)

Principles and expectations of Foster Carer Learning & Development

Supporting our foster carers to develop their skills, knowledge, and experience is important to us. Foster carers look after some of Somerset's most vulnerable children. This brings many rewards, but we need to recognise it also brings significant challenges. A robust Learning & Development programme that helps carers to meet these considerable challenges is at the heart of how Somerset Council supports our children within fostering families.

- All foster carers will receive mandatory training. To help support each foster carer to continue to develop their skills and knowledge, the Supervising Social Worker (SSW) will work with the foster carer to map out further training courses; with the expectation of at least **three** learning activities a year. Guidance on a range of training courses is outlined below.
- The core regulatory training requirements relate to 4 key areas: attachment, safer caring, first aid and Child Protection. In respect of safer care, it is important that family members are also included in training and development. SSW should ensure any gaps in these areas are addressed in the annual Personal Development Plan.
- Foster Carers Personal Development Plan (PDP) will record and evidence both mandatory and specific training and development for carers, and will be formulated annually, with regular reviews during foster carer supervisions. The plan will be a joint approach between foster carers and SSWs, and it will be shaped by the specific needs of the children cared for by the foster carer(s), and individual needs, interests and progression.
- To create a learning culture, high-quality training is needed. The learning programme will include a whole host of activities, such as personal research, mentoring, observation and co-delivery on training courses, and support and guidance from SSWs. Learning activities should be impactful and meaningful for carers, to ensure it supports both reflective practice and improved support and care for Somerset children.
- Foster carers are a crucial part of a wider Children's Social Care team in Somerset; joint training and shared learning opportunities where social work assistants, social workers, foster carers and other professionals engage unitedly in learning activities is actively encouraged.
- For new carers, the learning programme outlined below is enhanced by up to 3 sessions of support from the Emotion Health and Wellbeing Team.
- Where second carers are jointly approved, all carers in the household will need to do the mandatory training; other adults in the household will be supported with training opportunities through the SSW and this will be documented on the annual L&D plan.

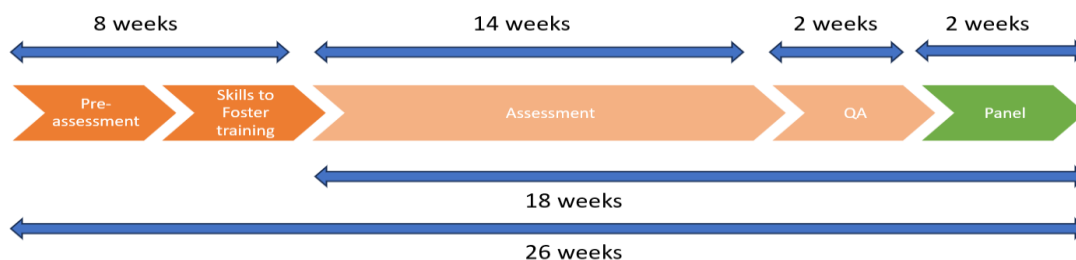
TSD standards (Training, Support & Development Standards for Foster Carers):

The TSD Standards build on the Induction Standards for staff who work in Children's Social Care (CSC) 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. And assist managers and supervisors in assessing the skills, knowledge, and experience of foster carers and in identifying their training and development needs.

More information can be found here: [TSD standards workbook for foster carers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tsd-standards-workbook-for-foster-carers) Somerset have created their own standards based on the National guidance which have supporting documents to support the learning and development. These are available from your SSW.

Assessment timescale:



Pre- Assessment (4 weeks – Initial home visit, attend Skills to Foster)
Initial Home visit and inspection Skills to foster would normally be completed.

Mandatory learning and development
(which would normally be undertaken in assessment)

During the assessment period, potential foster carers will be linked with a Buddy/Mentor to support them through the process.

As well as the mandatory training on this programme, the SSW will support you to identify your learning needs, and record this in a L&D PDP plan which is reviewed at least once a year. Alongside regular supervisions, SSWs will routinely discuss, review and signpost Carers to L&D opportunities to reflect any change in need of the child in their care and the foster carer requirements.

Course	Guidance
Introduction to Attachment	No specific refresher required. It is an expectation that attachment and trauma informed practice/care is part of continued development.
Child Protection awareness:	Refresher requirements –every 2 years. (Now includes FGM, Prevent and Child Exploitation)
First Aid for the CSC Workforce	Refresher requirements –every 3 years.
Safer care, complaints, and allegations	No refresher routinely required. Safer care and understanding around complaints and allegations are vital in fostering, and all members of a family should be involved in this training and development. The SSW should be satisfied that all safer care L&D needs are met within this area, including considering other family members in the home.
E-learning – Equality, diversity, Inclusion and belonging – this includes LGBTQ+	No refresher routinely required. Society and communities are constantly involving and an understanding in these areas is vital in foster carer development.
Food safety	Food safety information page should be read and revisited when required. https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/weaning-and-feeding/childrens-food-safety-and-hygiene/#maincontent There is a link embedded in the Foster Carers page on TLC. Supervising social workers (SSW) and senior social worker assistants (SSWA) are responsible for checking this has been completed and updating LCS. <i>Continued understanding of food safety is vital in all households, and as children grow and learn. An agreed approach to this learning and understanding, will be discussed with foster carers and SSW's when required.</i>

TSD standards (Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers), should be completed within 12 months from approval. From 1st November 2023, workbooks can be downloaded from the TLC.



Recommended learning and development				
<i>The requirement for attending/completing the recommended learning and development is 1 foster carer per household to attend. Where recommended training is not undertaken, a clear rational should be documented by the SSW and agreed with the foster carer.</i>				
Birth to 4 years old. (Before starting formal education provision)	Primary sch. age children (4 – 11 years)	Secondary sch. age children (11 – 18 years)	Course	Guidance
✓	✓	✓	Life Story	This is a core priority for Somerset Council, and an approach at the heart of how we aim to support our Somerset children, so will often be included in L&D plans.
✓	✓	✓	Family Time and Reconnection	This training is particularly important for a foster carer supporting any child engaging with Family Time or likely to access family time.
✓	✓		Roles and Responsibilities in the Adoption/ Special Guardian Process	Should be attended if the baby/child you are caring for has a plan to be adopted or move to a SG placement.
	✓	✓	De-escalation for Foster carers	
	✓	✓	Supporting the Education of Somerset's CLA	
	✓	✓	Attachment Based Parenting	To be attended if the child you are caring for is staying with you for 3 months or more. SSW and Foster carer will consider this in annual L&D training plans as attachment-based parenting is at the heart of our Somerset fostering model of care.
		✓	Leaving Care Service	Only attend when the child in your care turns 15.





Fostering Category:	Guidance:
Emergency Foster Carer (0 – 18 years)	If a child or young person remains in your care for 3 months, then you are required to look at the recommended learning and development for the age group you are caring for.

Fostering Category:	Course:	Guidance:
CwD Short breaks (0 -18 years short stays)	E-Learning: Manual Handling	To be completed if physically moving a child/young person and equipment.
	E-Learning: Infection Control	To be completed if you are providing personal care
	How Does it Feel?	To be booked if a child or young person in your care is being hoisted and is reliant on you for personal care.

Fostering Category:	Course:	Guidance:
CwD Short Breaks (0 -18 years - <u>permanent</u> placements)	Life Story	See above.
	SEND	
	Leaving Care	Attend when the child in your care turns 15.
	Transitions to Adult Services.	Attend if the young person you care for is moving into adult services.
	E-Learning: Manual Handling	To be completed if physically moving a child/young person and equipment.
	E-Learning: Infection Control	To be completed if you are providing personal care.
	How Does it Feel?	To be booked if a child or young person in your care is being hoisted and is reliant on you for personal care.

Fostering Category:	Guidance:
Short Stay Providers (Foster Carers who only offer short stays/respite care)	Please attend learning and development opportunities in line with the age of the child/young people you care for.



Fostering Category:	Course:	Guidance:
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)	Culture and Identity	
	Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children – UASC	
	UASC Conference	
	Please regularly check the UASC page on TLC as resources are regularly added	

Fostering Category:	Course:	Guidance:
Family Assessment and Support Team (FAST)	De-Escalation for foster carers	See above.
	FAST Carers have 6 additional learning and developmental opportunities per year, where attendance is an expectation these specialist carers would complete this training.	

Fostering Category:	Course:	Guidance:
Remand Foster Carers	Appropriate Adult Training	
	Youth Justice Service	

Different training approaches and opportunities

Supervising social workers and foster carers will work together to identify needs, gaps in knowledge, and skills and formulate a plan. Evidence of this development can be provided by, for example:

- Reviewing reading material from books, articles and best practice guides or videos.
- Attending additional training courses.
- Mentoring and/or completing a reflective written report.
- Summarising learning, understanding and how this has impacted on children.
- Through recording of discussions with foster carers and supervising social workers (SSW) and reflective practice sessions with a SSW.

Foster Carers may at times be asked to attend a refresher course, when there have been changes, due to various circumstances within the foster family, or around specific needs of a child or young person that is being cared for.

Developmental opportunities: these are open to all carers once mandatory learning and development has been completed:		
Appropriate Adult Training	Caring for Children & Young People that have been Sexually Abused	Compassion Fatigue
Culture and Identity	Drug and Alcohol Awareness	Domestic Abuse – Somerset Survivors
Child Development	Family Time & Reconnection	Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
Mental Health Awareness	Motivational Interviewing Foster Carers ONLY	Online Safety, Social Media & Online Gaming
SEND	The Solihull Approach	Transitions to Adult Services
Tuning into Kids & Tuning into Teens	Team Teach	Youth Justice Service
Progression routes:		
Fostering Plus	Available to carers when all mandatory Learning and development is up to date. Refer to TLC for further information.	
Level 3 Diploma for the Children & Young People's Workforce	Available to carers when all learning and development is up to date, and you have been fostering for at least 2 years. Accredited training, 2 years to complete, 13 mandatory modules, an agreed number of optional units, allocated a specific Assessor to support you through the process. A certificate of undertaking will need to be agreed and signed.	
PILOT - Level 3 Certificate in Applied Therapeutic Practice.	4 full days accredited training with 4 assignments to be completed, commitment 4 months. This is running in October and November 2023; all places for Autumn 2023 have been booked, further dates TBC. The content and feedback from this training will inform the decision to continue with this opportunity.	