

## **Fostering Service Framework for Foster Carer Fee Payment Model**

### **Overview**

This framework underpins the Fostering Service commitment to achieving best possible outcomes for looked after children who are fostered, supported by skilled, motivated and rewarded foster carers. The framework has a pre-accreditation period and then four accredited grades of payment for skills and experience. It provides entry requirements and expectations regarding carer training and skills development and reflective learning for each level.

- This framework aims to assist foster carers by providing clarity about expectations and requirements at each grade, both for new entrants and for those approved carers wishing to progress to a higher level.
- The model has minimum entry requirements for new carers at each grade and also allows existing carers to progress up through the grades if they meet the task, skills and competencies required.
- In addition to the minimum requirements of all foster carers (as listed for Pre-Accredited Foster Carers below) foster will be expected to develop increasing levels of skill, knowledge and experience. This will be recognised by designating 4 grades of accredited foster carer.
- There are 4 grades of accredited foster carers each of which receive a specific fee: Accredited; Experienced; Enhanced; Advanced. The fee levels reflect the tasks, skills and competencies requirements for that grade.
- Fees are distinct from weekly maintenance allowance payments for any child/young person in placement. Fees provide financial reward to foster carers following a matching of their skills and competencies and their ability to undertake specified tasks to levels within the grade framework.
- Pre-accreditation foster carers are paid a weekly allowance when a child/young person placed but do not receive a fee. A weekly fee is paid to post accreditation foster carers (in addition to weekly maintenance allowance payments).
- Following approval, most foster carers will be pre-Accreditation foster carers. Once they have successfully completed the CWDC workbook and all Core training their designation changes, usually following a Foster Carer Review, to that of Accredited foster carers.

- Foster Carers will need to provide evidence for their Foster Carer Review that they meet, or continue to meet, the requirements of the respective grade.
- If a foster carer consistently fails to meet grade requirements (including training) a Foster Carer Review will be undertaken and there may be a probationary period, reduction in grade approval level, suspension of approval, or ultimately, withdrawal of approval.
- Foster carers wishing to be considered for progression to another grade should discuss this with their supervising social worker who will be able to provide further advice on progression requirements and procedure.
- In some instances there will be social work practice issues that will necessitate consideration of placing a child/young person for whom an Enhanced grade or Advanced grade foster carer would usually only be considered, with an Accredited grade or Experienced grade foster carer. In such circumstances the foster carer will temporarily be paid as an Enhanced or Advanced grade foster carer for the duration of the placement.
- Some foster carers may express a commitment to being 'fast tracked' to Advance foster carer level, and as such may initially be recognised at that level and need to demonstrate during placements that they meet the requirements so their continuation at this level can be established.

### **Model Overview: Entry Requirements and Financial Support**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Entry Requirements</b>	<b>Financial Support</b>
<b>Pre- accreditation foster carer</b>	Newly approved carers with some experience of childcare eg parenting/looking after other people's children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Allowances</li> <li>• No Fee</li> </ul>
<b>A: Accredited foster carer</b>	Have experience of childcare eg parenting/looking after other's children/paid or voluntary work in childcare/previous fostering experience (six months minimum)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Allowances</li> <li>• Fee</li> </ul>

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Entry Requirements</b>	<b>Financial Support</b>
<b>B: Experienced foster carer</b>	In addition to requirements of previous grade, evidence of significant childcare experience and ability to take more challenging children with more complex needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Allowances</li> <li>• Fee</li> </ul>
<b>C: Enhanced foster carer</b>	In addition to requirements of previous grades, significant formal childcare experience eg previous fostering (a minimum of three years previous fostering, including of children with complex needs) or employment in childcare or related experience eg nursing, youth work, teaching and ability to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the fostering task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Allowances</li> <li>• Fee</li> </ul>
<b>D: Advanced foster carer</b>	In addition to requirements of previous grades, significant previous experience and demonstrating an ability to respond appropriately to a child/young person whose capacity to make attachments is seriously damaged and to work positively with more extreme disturbed or angry behaviour. Available to support a child/young person who is not in full time education or who is excluded from school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weekly Allowances</li> <li>• Fee</li> </ul>

### **Transition to new framework of fee payments**

- In moving to this new framework for fee payments, all foster carers will complete a self assessment, based on the information below; to identify which grade they think best matches their fostering skills and experience. Their supervising social worker will also complete an assessment of which grade their skills and experience best match.
- It is anticipated that in most cases that both assessments will identify the same grade. If there is disagreement about this that cannot be resolved by further discussions between the foster carer and supervising social worker, the Head of Service will meet with a representative from YAFCA and an independent person to arbitrate. The Head of Service's decision will be final.

- In some instances there may be agreement to a provisional grade with agreement that this be reviewed in 6 months to establish whether the evidence from subsequent placement supports confirmation of this grade, or whether it needs to be revised.
- Following the implementation of the new grade system, all payments will be in line with the new structure. Any previously agreed exceptional fees will have been reviewed and the foster carer will receive the fee as determined by this review until the child/young person leaves the placement
- Fee rates and allowances are reviewed and annually (April) and are, on the council's website fostering pages:  
*[http://www.york.gov.uk/health/Fostering\\_adoption/Fostering/](http://www.york.gov.uk/health/Fostering_adoption/Fostering/)*

### **Pre-accreditation foster carer**

As a minimum requirement, **all** foster carers will be expected to:

- Have a basic knowledge of child development and an understanding of challenging behaviour
- Be able to maintain a warm, inclusive, nurturing environment within their family
- Ensure that a child/young person's health and education needs are met
- Work in partnership with parents to help a child/young person maintain awareness of their family of origin and culture
- Be able to work in partnership with a child/young person's social worker to develop and implement the plan for the child/young person
- Maintain a placement record and share this with the team around the child/young person where appropriate.
- Complete mandatory Core training programme within 12 months of approval and evidence learning from the training achieved.
- Connected People foster carers to complete Core training programme within 18 months of approval.
- Undertake an Annual Personal Development Plan
- Complete Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers standards requirements within one year of approval.
- Connected People foster carers to complete Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers standards requirements within 18 months of approval.

## **GRADES**

### **A - Accredited Foster Carer**

#### **Entry requirements:**

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

#### **Progression requirements:**

A foster carer at this level will have completed the Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers and the Core training programme and have a basic knowledge of fostering practice. They will have an understanding of the impact of abuse, neglect, and emotional distress on a child/young person's emotional development. They will have been an approved carer for at least 6 months.

#### **General requirements:**

- Evidence a commitment to self development via training and support, including mentoring from an experienced carer
- Undertake an Annual Personal Development Plan
- If progressed from Pre-Accredited foster carer they must complete three training courses within 12 months of progression to Accredited foster carer and three courses per year in subsequent years.
- New entrants at Accredited foster carer grade should complete mandatory Core Training programme and all Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers requirements within the first 12 months.

#### **Practice requirements ensuring that children achieve the best possible Outcomes from their placements:**

#### **Be Healthy**

- Provide a good standard of care for children in a safe, healthy and nurturing environment
- Ensure the health and safety of children/young people within the home including completion of the Health and Safety checklist
- Maintain appropriate placement records, including the maintenance of a Foster Carer Diary (as provided by the Fostering Service)

- Record significant events eg medical/health/dental appointments; unauthorised absences from the foster home; contact; child behaviours; incidents/events reported to child's social worker
- Help and encourage children to be healthy via healthy diet, lifestyle and regular exercise
- Attend medical and dental appointments with the child/young person
- Encourage awareness and understanding of drug and alcohol issues and positively promote the development of good sexual health
- Facilitate the fostered child/young person to receive health care which meets his/her needs for good physical, emotional and social development
- Promote and support contact for a fostered child/young person and promote family relationships where appropriate
- Act as advocate for the child/young person in cooperation with other professionals/agencies eg school/education/health/police
- To be able to communicate with disabled children in their preferred way

### **Stay Safe**

- Protect children/young people from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and deprivation
- Set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour within these without recourse to physical chastisement. Discuss and clarify boundaries in conjunction with others eg social worker; supervising fostering officer
- Provide and maintain suitable accommodation for the number, needs and age of the child/young person in placement
- Provide a safe, stimulating and stable environment to the varied needs of individual children/young people taking into account their backgrounds and experiences
- Maintain a safe care plan for each child/young person in placement
- Make positive use of supervision and guidance from a supervising social worker and reflect and learn from advice given
- Attend and contribute to foster carer reviews and reflective learning opportunities

- Attend and contribute to child care reviews and meetings for children in placement
- Be alert to any issues raised in a child's risk assessment

### **Enjoy and Achieve**

- Provision of foster care which values and promotes diversity and equality
- Ability to listen to and communicate with children/young people appropriate to their age, understanding, individual needs and ethnicity and culture
- Actively promote, support and encourage children's/young people's education and achievement under the guidance of a child's Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Attend and contribute to PEP Reviews
- Establish and maintain daily routines for children/young people eg school attendance; assisting with homework
- Assist and encourage the development of children's/young people's self esteem and positive identity by supporting participation in social activities and leisure pursuits
- Play an active role in relationships with education providers eg attending school parents evenings; contributing/commenting on school reports/supporting school – home agreements
- Ensure that appropriate levels and standards of clothing are provided
- Assist children/young people moving to other placements when required and as part of a child's placement plan eg return to birth family; to other foster placement; to adoption placement

### **Make a Positive Contribution**

- Help children/young people cope with issues of separation and loss and assist them with coming to terms with previous experiences
- Assist children/young people maintain a positive view of their family and support and facilitate contact as agreed in a placement plan where appropriate
- Liaise closely with a child's social worker and work to agreed plans for the child/young person
- Maintain Confidentiality
- Work closely with other professionals in the best interest of the child/young person eg school; education; health; therapeutic services

- Demonstrate commitment to sustaining a placement as agreed in the child's care/placement plan.
- Demonstrate a commitment to ending placements in a planned, agreed way
- Assist and support contact arrangements.

### **Achieve Economic Well Being**

- Enable a child to move on positively to other placements eg return to birth family/other foster placements/adoption where appropriate and as part of the child care plan
- To attend and contribute to child care 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
- Promote and encourage the development of independence/life skills where age appropriate
- Assist young people to develop the skills, confidence and knowledge necessary for successful adult living

### **(B) Experienced Foster Carer**

#### **Entry requirements:**

Evidence childcare experience eg parenting/looking after other's children/paid or voluntary work in childcare/previous fostering experience (at least two years) and ability to take more challenging children with more complex needs.

#### **Progression Requirements:**

Have been an approved carer for at least two years and met the requirements of this grade as evidenced through a Foster Carer Progression Report. Consideration may be given to progressing sooner in exceptional circumstances.

#### **General Requirements:**

- Must be able to take children with more complex needs and undertake more challenging tasks than for Accredited grade.



- If progressing from Accredited grade, attend three courses from the training menu within 12 months then complete three courses from the training menu each subsequent year.
- New entrants at Experienced Foster Carer grade to complete all core training and all Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers requirements. New entrants who can evidence previous relevant Training and Development experience may be able to offset this against some Mandatory Training requirements. This should be discussed with new entrants as part of initial and subsequent assessment prior to approval
- Produce an annual Personal Development Plan.

**Practice requirements ensuring that children achieve the best possible outcomes from their placement:**

**Be Healthy- Experienced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grade)

- Provide good, quality care to meet the needs of a child/young person
- Show a commitment to developing greater understanding of the range of child care and child development issues
- Utilise basic therapeutic parenting techniques under the guidance of social workers/other professionals
- Promote, support and supervise contact.
- Assist with Life Story work for children in placement.

**Stay Safe - Experienced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Evidence skills development required to meet the needs of more complex and demanding children/young people
- Contribute to professional assessments under the guidance of the child's social worker, supervising social worker or other professionals

**Enjoy and Achieve- Experienced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Make proactive contributions to problem resolution in school for children/young people placed, alongside supporting parents in school problem resolution where appropriate

## **Make a Positive Contribution- Experienced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Maintain accurate placement records and provide written reports as required
- Attend Court proceedings involving children/young people and/or provide statements where required
- Actively support work with birth parents/extended family where appropriate
- Challenge attitudes which perpetuate disadvantage and discrimination.

## **Achieve Economic Well Being**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

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

## **(C) Enhanced Foster Carer**

### **Entry requirements:**

Foster carers will have developed a thorough knowledge of the impact of abuse, neglect and emotional distress on a child/young person's emotional development. They will have the skills to offer placements to children and young people who may exhibit a range of difficult behaviours such as physical or verbal aggression; inappropriate sexualised behaviour; drug or alcohol abuse; offending behaviour; self harm; difficulties in school attendance. They will have a good understanding of attachment difficulties and mental health issues for young people.

### **Progression Requirements:**

Must have been a foster carer for at least three years and provide evidence of a skill set reflecting high level competencies and experience through a portfolio of evidence. Consideration may be given to progression sooner in exceptional circumstances.

## **General requirements:**

A foster carer at this level will demonstrate the skills and experience required at the preceding levels but will also be able to:

- Demonstrate the ability to work constructively with difficult and challenging behaviour in a child/young person
- Work professionally with parents or other family members even where there is conflict
- Use wider experience and knowledge of fostering in contributing to the plan for a child/young person
- Challenge constructively opinions and views of other professionals and agencies
- Give evidence in court and to be able to offer expert opinion based on fostering experience
- Independently advocate for child/young person with other agencies, including social care, education and health
- Participate in training and support of foster carers and social workers
- If progressing from Experienced Foster Carer grade, attend a minimum of three courses per year from Training Menu as identified via assessment of carer training needs.
- New entrants must complete all Core training and all Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers requirements. New entrants who can evidence previous relevant Training and Development experience may be able to offset this against some Mandatory Training requirements. This should be discussed with new entrants as part of assessment prior to approval
- Maintain a detailed Personal Development Portfolio, evidencing continuing development of fostering skills and competencies

## **Practice requirements ensuring that children achieve the best possible outcomes from their placement:**

### **Be Healthy- Enhanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Maintain active involvement with and provide information to appropriate specialist health services to meet the needs of placed

children/young people eg therapeutic services. Provide mentor support/advice to other carers in these areas

### **Stay Safe- Enhanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Assist with plans/agreements for children/young people as required. Work to agreements and contracts to achieve placement plans and related outcomes
- 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
- Work cooperatively and supportively with birth family/relatives where considered appropriate

### **Enjoy and Achieve- Enhanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

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

### **Make a Positive Contribution- Enhanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Develop skills and evidence ability to work closely with birth parents/extended family in order to achieve placement plans
- Provide input to specialised/therapeutic parenting strategies with professional support and guidance

### **Achieve Economic Well Being- Enhanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Provide detailed reports as required and contribute to a wide range of meetings/forums

## **(D) Advanced Foster Carer**

### **Entry requirements:**

Significant formal childcare experience eg previous fostering experience of three years minimum including with children with complex needs/employment in childcare or related experience eg nursing, youth work, teaching. An ability to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the fostering task.

### **Progression Requirements:**

Must have been a foster carer for at least three years and provide evidence of a skill set reflecting high level competencies and experience through a portfolio of evidence. Consideration may be given to progression sooner in exceptional circumstances.

### **General requirements:**

- Foster carers at this grade will be able to demonstrate skills and understanding in working with young people with a very high level of need. They will be able to care for young people with particularly challenging behaviour, including those who may be a physical or sexual threat to peers and those remanded to care or with persistent criminal behaviour.
- They will have the skills and experience to offer placements to young people previously placed in residential placements or where residential placement may be an option.
- Advanced foster carers will be skilled in particular areas of expertise (it is not expected that they will be skilled in **all** areas), such as meeting the needs of young people with severe physical or learning difficulties, caring for young people with significant mental health issues, caring for large sibling groups and supporting young parents
- One approved carer in the household must have a full time commitment to fostering; if they have any part time work it must fit around the fostering task so a carer is always available if a young person excluded from school, needs to attend court/hospital etc.
- They will act as a Mentor to newly approved carers
- To attend a minimum of three courses per year from Training Menu as identified via assessment of carer training needs.

- New entrants must complete all core training and all Training Support and Development Standards for Foster Carers requirements. New entrants who can evidence previous relevant Training and Development experience may be able to offset this against some Mandatory Training requirements. This should be discussed with new entrants as part of assessment prior to approval
- Maintain a detailed Personal Development Portfolio, evidencing continuing development of high level fostering skills and competencies
- Participate in the delivery of new carer preparation and training in partnership with Fostering Service staff. Support and assist the Fostering Service in promoting a positive fostering profile, including involvement in foster carer recruitment initiatives

**Practice requirements ensuring that children achieve the best possible outcomes from their placement:**

**Be Healthy- Advanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Achieve sustained high level work with specialist health services for children young people, including direct work with the child/young person in placement
- Supervise contact arrangements and provide detailed analysis and assessment of contact arrangements inside and outside the foster home
- Recording and reporting of a high quality and detail that can inform the development of child care planning

**Stay Safe - Advanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Provide commitment to specialised placements of children/young people with the most complex needs eg: Parent/Child; Assessment; Remand; Permanence; Children with a disability; Children/Young People having experienced significant disruption; Children/Young people who might otherwise require a residential placement
- Provision of Emergency placements (including EDT) and those required at short notice.
- Management of persistently challenging and anti-social behaviours of children/young people placed

### **Enjoy and Achieve- Advanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- 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-Advanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- 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
- In consultation with supervising fostering officer and child's social worker, taking 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-Advanced Foster Carer requirements**

(in addition to requirements at previous grades)

- Actively support and encourage (alongside parents where appropriate), young people to engage in further education/training/employment opportunities
- Play a pro-active role, in close liaison with other professionals in supporting a young person's transition to new experiences and adult life
- 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 eg compiling CV's/application forms