



FOSTER CARER COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

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Competency Framework

Introduction

The competency framework sets out the key factors for determining a foster carers fee level.

Each level has identified criteria which must be evidenced before progression can take place. Approval for progression depends on:

- the foster carers assessed core skills;
- their experience and
- the training that they have undertaken.

Foster carers can request that they are considered for progression to the next level at any time. They do not have to wait for their annual review.

Evidence of competency can be drawn from foster carers' annual reviews and other feedback received.

Progression through the framework is achieved by meeting the requirements of the new skill level.

1.1 Most foster carers will be approved at Entry Level.

Some prospective foster carers may have significant experience of providing childcare or possess other transferable skills from other settings and have relevant qualifications. In these circumstances, it may be possible for a new foster carer to be approved at a higher skills' level provided they are able to provide evidence that they can meet the criteria for that level. Possible examples are a registered childminder or a teacher.

1.2 Foster carers who are seeking an initial approval at level 4 must be able to evidence considerable experience and skills within a related field. Examples might include experienced foster carers transferring to the local authority from an independent fostering agency, or a residential or youth justice worker.

In addition to this, the prospective level 4 foster carer must attend an interview with the fostering service manager and residential fostering manager.

Any agreement for a prospective/newly approved carer to start at a higher skills level is subject to approval by a Fostering Service Manager.

1.3 The Fostering Service will be responsible for ensuring that foster carers are given sufficient support and encouragement towards professional development through the provision of training opportunities appropriate to the skills level required.

SSWs will also work with their foster carers to produce a personal development plan.

1.4 Foster carers can request that they are progressed to the next skills level at any point in the year and do not have to wait for the foster carers annual review.

Foster carers are required to have completed the Training Support and Development Standards (TSDS) workbook within one year of initial approval (extended to 18 months in respect of Family and Friends foster carers) before progression and any other mandatory training courses relevant their current skills level will be considered.

1.5 Skills progression will be based upon self-assessment using the appropriate form, which can be downloaded from the Payment for skills folder in the foster carer handbook.

Foster carers can complete the relevant form, but should discuss with the SSW. The form must be signed and dated, as each competency is completed.

The SSW should also request testimonials from other professionals regarding the care given or training received. Testimonials can be provided by the child's social worker, independent reviewing officer, school or other foster carers. Feedback documents already produced by these professionals for the purpose of the foster carer's annual review can be reused for this purpose rather than duplicating work.

1.6 The completed form should be returned to the SSW, who will comment on the outcomes of any allegations or complaints against the foster carer in the last year.

The SSW will also note any compliments or commendations received about the foster carer and summarise any testimonials received.

The SSW will then make their recommendations and give their reason for their recommendation and pass the assessment to the relevant team manager for quality assurance.

The team manager will make a recommendation and pass the assessment to the fostering service manager for final decision.

The service manager will record their decision and their reason for it on the assessment form.

The decision will then be communicated to the SSW and the foster carer payments team. The SSW will inform the foster carer.

If the service manager decides not to progress the foster carer to the next level, the foster carer can write to the Head of Service within 28 days of the decision, explaining why they feel the decision is unfair.

The decision will then be reviewed by the Head of Service and a final decision made.

1.7 In a case where the fostering service is considering stepping down a foster carer from a skill level to a lower level, the SSW should discuss this with the foster carer in the first instance.

When there is no improvement, the SSW should complete the payment for skills level self-assessment form with the foster carer for the level the foster carer is

currently on. This will then be presented to the team manager for recommendation and passed to the service manager for decision.

1.8 If a foster carer disagrees with any decision made within the competency framework process, they can write to the fostering service within 28 days of the decision being communicated to them.

The decision will then be reviewed by the Head of Service and a final decision made.