



Department
for Education

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care: Engaging All Carers Factsheet

This factsheet provides some ideas and solutions to barriers and challenges you may face in implementing the TSD Standards with all carers.

Refreshed: November 2012

Fostering service providers have told us that some foster carers are more difficult to engage in completing the TSD Standards than others. For example:

- Foster carers who have difficulty with language or literacy.
- Foster carers with higher level qualifications.
- Male carers.
- Friends and family (kinship) foster carers.
- Foster carers with many years of experience.

We have collated feedback from providers about how best to approach implementation with these carers and suggested some solutions overleaf. It is likely that you will need to allocate more resource to supporting these carers and it may take more one-to-one work to encourage, support and motivate them to complete the TSD Standards.

The Fostering Network has developed a toolkit, called Learning Together: Learning from each other, which focuses on engagement of 'hard to reach' foster carers.

A copy can be downloaded at <http://www.fostering.net/all-about-fostering/resources/reports/learning-together-learning-each-other>

Group sessions

Feedback from foster carers and supervising social workers has identified that group sessions can be very beneficial to all parties involved. They enhance the learning experience and enable foster carers to problem solve ideas/evidence for themselves. It also assists those with lower level literacy issues as they can help formulate answers together which boosts confidence.

Carers can bring their workbooks and work together through the standards using case materials and reflective conversations with supervising social workers around how they are supporting the child in their care. Including experienced foster carers, as peer mentors, in this type of approach can bring benefits. Foster carers can learn from each other, bringing a range of examples of successful ways that they have met a child's needs and overcome problems.

Peer mentoring

Carers with a lot of experience and/or higher level qualifications bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role. One way of encouraging these carers to get involved in the process is to use this knowledge and experience to support others. The Fostering Network has developed good practice guidelines for setting up a peer mentoring scheme and there is a chapter that looks at how mentoring can be used with the TSD Standards. For further information, go to the Fostering Network's website at <http://www.fostering.net/all-about-fostering/resources/good-practice-guidance/foster-carer-peer-mentoring-good-practice-guide>

Below is a summary of some of the tried and tested solutions that fostering services have suggested.

Carers who have difficulty with language or literacy

- The spelling, grammar and the way evidence is written is less important than the content.
- Use an MP3 player to record evidence.
- Use witness statements, supervision notes and observation records.
- Create support groups based on language/abilities.
- Use short question and answer sessions, with the supervising social worker taking notes of the discussion. Notes can then be used as evidence.

Carers with higher level qualifications

- Mapping previous qualifications to the TSD Standards and provide evidence where there are gaps.
- These carers are a valuable asset – encourage them to share their knowledge and/or become mentors to other carers.

Male carers

- Make the resources more male orientated.
- Use of computer and internet – get partner to research on the internet.
- Run male specific support groups, which are accessible to those who work full-time.
- Make resources available and accessible out of office hours e.g. e-learning and worksheets.
- ‘Unpicking’ the contribution male partner makes and linking it to relevant standards.
- Ensure that both carers attend supervision at least every other visit.

Friends and family (kinship) carers

- Learn from and use of champions as a way to engage them.
- Simplify the TSD Standards and use worksheets.
- Offer incentives e.g. payments to attend training.
- Encourage kinship carers to feel part of a team.

Carers with many years of experience

- Reinforce that the TSD Standards are achievable and they will have much of the evidence already.
- Run small groups within foster carers’ homes.
- Provide additional one-to-one support to motivate carers.
- Provide incentives.
- Use their experience and knowledge to support others.



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