



Department
for Education

Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care: Assessment Factsheet

Assessing foster carers' workbooks

This factsheet provides information about the role of the assessor, ways of assessing the TSD Standards, certification and achieving consistency.

Refreshed: November 2012

The assessor, usually the supervising social worker, will evaluate what the foster carer knows, understands and is able to do in order to meet the TSD Standards. The assessor will have responsibility to sign off each of the standards.

Where staff are not experienced in assessment, fostering service providers should consider what extra training and support assessor's need. Working together with a colleague who is skilled in assessment (e.g. NVQ assessor) can help get a shared understanding of what is involved in assessing the TSD Standards.

However, it is important that everyone understands the level at which the TSD Standards are set, which is at induction level. In other words, what a foster carer would be expected to know within 12 months of approval. All evidence should reflect the fact that this is induction or foundation level.

The level of evidence and assessment should not be the same as that used for the NVQ Level 3 in Health and Social Care¹. However, the skills and knowledge evidenced in the TSD Standards can be built on and expanded as the foster carer gains more experience and can be used to contribute to achieving the Level 3 Diploma.

Assessing the evidence against the TSD Standards

Both the initial personal development plan and the foster carer's annual review provide opportunities to identify a carer's knowledge and skills, and to identify any training and development needs.

It is important that foster carers make sure their learning is up to date, but it is not necessary for foster carers to repeat their learning and development simply to meet the TSD Standards. Foster carers who hold an NVQ in Health and Social Care will have much of the evidence to meet the TSD Standards.

Knowledge and skills can be assessed from:

- Observed actions, such as observing a foster carer at a LAC review meeting or from a professional discussion you have had in supervision.
- Written evidence, such as a reflective piece of writing, a certificate or a daily diary log.
- Questioning. This can be an effective way of eliciting evidence, especially if carers are struggling to understand what is required of them to meet a particular standard. See example below:

¹ The NVQ level 3 in Health and Social Care has been replaced by the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. Optional foster care units within this Diploma have been informed by the TSD Standards

Exemplar: questioning

Foster carers are expected to 'communicate effectively'. Why is communication important?

What are the different ways to communicate? Who do you need to communicate with and why?

Answers to these questions can potentially meet outcomes: 2.1b, 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.2a, 4.2b, 4.2c and 5.5d

If assessment is carried out in a group setting (e.g. during a training course), the process must clearly assess the knowledge of each foster carer, rather than the understanding of the group as a whole. Trainers can use worksheets, a quiz or case studies with questions or exercises as part of the training course to assess the foster carer's understanding.

Certificate of successful completion

The foster carer should be issued with a certificate upon successful completion of the TSD Standards. It is recommended that the supervising social worker signs off the individual standards, but that an agency manager or trainer who has not been directly involved signs off all the workbooks and signs the certificates. This would ensure that they can check the consistency and quality of the work and that agency standards for training and development are maintained.

In the back of the TSD Standards workbook there is the Certificate of Successful Completion. However, many providers have developed their own certificates, making them more personalised and service specific.

The certificate is recognition of the work that foster carers have put into completing the TSD Standards. Some providers have further recognised foster carers' achievements by hosting an award event or highlighting their achievements in newsletters

Consistency

The issue of consistency and support in relation to assessment/signing off is a difficulty many providers have come across. To ensure consistency in terms of quality and quantity of evidence provided by carers, a range of approaches to manage this have been developed including "norming" or "internal verification" meetings. For example, once the supervising social worker has signed-off the foster carers' workbooks, the team leader or training officer will sign off all of the workbooks or, in some cases, a sample of them. The example below outlines one such approach.

Exemplar: Achieving consistency across your service

Staffordshire County Council has set up a standardisation panel to ensure there is a consistency of approach to evidencing and assessment across the fostering service. The panel acts as an internal verification and standardisation resource for foster carers' portfolios. Portfolios come to panel for immediate verification following the completion of 2 standards and on completion of the portfolio

The panel meets monthly and consists of a core group including Team Manager, Senior Practitioner, Placement Coordinator, NVQ Assessor and representatives from the service teams.

Feedback is given to the assessor via a feedback form. The panel also has a consultation role, whereby assessors can meet with them to discuss portfolio building. This ensures that portfolios are checked independently and by someone who does not know or work with the carer directly.

Warwickshire County Council has 5 districts and they have a county-wide TSD Standards working group that meets bi-monthly. The working group comprises a representative from each of the 5 districts, which ensures a consistency of approach.



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