

## **Wakefield Fostering Service Skills Payment Scheme**

This document serves as Wakefield's policy and guidance for all approved carers on the skills payment scheme.

### **Why is there a Payment for Skills Scheme?**

Wakefield Children and Young Peoples Services recognise that family-based care offers significant advantages in terms of outcomes for looked after children and young people. In order to maximise these advantages it is necessary to have a fostering scheme that provides carers with the opportunity to apply practice and learning in caring for looked after children.

Wakefield carers receive an allowance for the children in their care but we also recognise that carers need the skills to fulfil the demanding role of fostering and as such we provide a skill based payment scheme to all carers with the exception of Regulation 24 and Regulation 38(6) carers.

The benefits and guidance to the scheme applies to all foster carers whether mainstream or connected person's carers.

### **Under the Scheme:**

- Skill payments are made for the skills and abilities of the foster carers to undertake the tasks at each level.
- The skill payment is paid in addition to the fostering allowance (a weekly sum for the maintenance of an individual child). This is paid to all mainstream and connected person's carers.
- Foster carers are entitled to a maximum of 2 weeks holiday every year.
- Carers' assessed abilities can be effectively matched to the needs of the children and young person's needs.
- Carers assessed and evidenced abilities can be matched to the fee levels and a carer's structure.
- All schemes are integrated into one comprehensive scheme including families and friends, respite carers, foster carers for children with special needs and mainstream care.
- The scheme incorporates the opportunity for career progression through the skills levels that will attract and retain carers.
- Retention payments are made to carers when no children are in placement for a period not exceeding 8 weeks.
- Respite carers receive a skill payment once a child is in placement.
- Support and mentoring are built into a scheme.
- Training is linked in to each level and to progression through the levels.
- Portfolios of evidence collected and training completed contribute to the requirements of carers' progression and will encourage more foster carers to seek development opportunities/qualifications and thereby increase the quality of the fostering service.

- During an investigation of an allegation where children are removed from the foster carer's home, the skill payment retention fee of 8 weeks will apply and this will be reviewed every 8 weeks thereafter. The allowance for the child will cease to be paid during an allegation in cases where children are moved.

### **How do I qualify for a skill payment?**

In most cases all newly approved carers will start at the introductory level which is level one, unless there has been sufficient evidence provided to the Service that prospective carers can meet a number of requirements such as proven child care experience in a regulated setting, transferable skills from other care settings and relevant qualifications. A comprehensive portfolio will need to be provided which should include any copies of qualifications, training undertaken and a document that outlines the competencies achieved.

Any agreement for a prospective/newly approved carer to start on a higher skill level will be reached by a Financial Panel in discussion with the assessing social worker.

In order to qualify for certain skill level payments, carers will be required to demonstrate that they have met a number of competency requirements. Wakefield's own competencies have been developed with close reference to the BAAF foster care competencies. Reference is also made to the Children's Workforce Development Council which is now named Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for Foster Carers from 2013. It is expected that all foster carers will achieve the TSD standards within one year of approval or within 18 months of approval if a connected person.

Because Wakefield's scheme allows for carers to progress from one payment level to another it is necessary to differentiate between the skills required to meet the competency at each level. There are currently 3 levels of skills and carers will need to demonstrate that they have, and can evidence, each of the competencies in order to qualify for the payment at the desired skill level.

All decisions relating to the progression of carers skills levels will be determined by a Financial Panel once all reports have been submitted for consideration.

Please note, any carer who is just approved as a respite carer will only receive a skill payment when there is a child in placement. The skills payment will be based on a percentage of the duration of the respite placement.

### **Connected Persons Carers (i.e. family and friends):**

All approved connected persons carers receive a skill payment and also have the opportunity to progress through the skill levels depending if they meet, and can evidence, the competencies required for progression.

In some cases connected persons carers might have a child placed with them in an emergency or through legal proceedings prior to a full assessment being undertaken.

In these situations only **Temporary Approval** is given and in these cases the carers will only receive the allowance for the child placed as the Service has not had the opportunity to undertake a full assessment of suitability. Once the matter has been presented to the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker for approval, a skill level will be made to the carer on an agreed assessed level of competency. All connected persons carers will join the skill payment scheme at the entry level on skill level one as do the majority of mainstream carers.

Once approved the Service has the same expectations of connected person's carers as with mainstream carers in terms of maintaining a Personal Development Plan, attending training or participation in development opportunities such as on-line training. We recognise that we may have to find alternative ways to deliver training and development opportunities due to the nature of connected care and the relationships carers have with children in their care. The Service can also gain evidence of your skills through the care that is being provided and this is important evidence for progression. Connected carers can only progress through the skills payment scheme if the criteria for progression has been met and evidenced and this also applies to mainstream carers.

### **Payments:**

Carers will be paid at set fee levels from Level 1 to Level 3.

#### **Level 1:**

Level 1 carers will receive a set skill amount of £50. This level is our entry level to foster care. Most carers will join the Service at this level before they are able to demonstrate the competencies needed to progress through to a higher level.

The Level 1 Scheme is an introductory scheme and no additional payments are made for more than one child.

#### **Level 2:**

Level 2 carers will receive the set fee of £125:

- Plus £50 for a second child and £25 for a third child. In the event of larger siblings groups over a third child, they would receive £25 for each subsequent placement.

#### **Level 3:**

Level 3 carers will receive the set fee of £225:

- Plus £75 for a second child and £50 for a third child. In the event of larger siblings groups over a third child, they would receive £50 for each subsequent placement.

#### **Level 4:**

- The Level 4 Scheme is to be extended under application and assessment, against suitable criteria, for caring for our more complex children but this will not be part of the normal progression process. This would include parent and baby assessment placements. Existing carers who are successful in

applying for Level 4, will only receive the payment following the start of a new complex placement or, in cases where a child or young person has been fully assessed as needing therapeutic residential or therapeutic foster care as determined by the care plan, and by remaining with the current carer, has provided placement stability. All new Level 4 carers would need to be approved at Finance Panel.

- The Service will set up a scheme for Remand / PACE (and children at risk of offending). This is as a result of both the statutory and complex nature of placements. Existing carers will be eligible to apply but will need to be assessed against the suitable criteria, however this will not be part of the normal skill progression process or apply to any existing children already in placement. The payment of £450 per week will be made 52 weeks of the year. There will be a clear commitment from the Remand / PACE carer that if no child or young person is placed with them they will support Children and Young People Services in supporting other children and young people either within the community or within the wider Looked after Children population. Similar to that of the Level 4 scheme, a further £200 for any additional placement would be given.

### **Guidance Notes:**

When a child moves from a placement, carers are entitled to an 8 week retainer that is in line with the set fee depending on the skill level. In cases where there are no children in placement and no placements are made within the 8 weeks the retainer will cease until further placements are made.

In cases where carers who have no children in placement and provide a breakaway placement, and in some cases a time limited emergency placement during the 8 week period, you will only be paid the skill payment for the duration any child is in the placement. For example, breakaway placements could be for a weekend or one week. In order for the full skill payment to resume you must either provide a short or long term placement.

Whilst carers are offered the retainer payment there are circumstances where payments may not be made as detailed below.

### **Sick Leave:**

In situations where carers need to take sick leave and are unable to take placements the Service does not have a statutory duty to provide continued payments. All approved carers are self-employed; therefore you will need to seek advice from a benefits agency regarding payments that you might be entitled to as there are Employment Support Allowances available. In all cases FosterTalk can provide advice and assistance.

In the event that a carer is injured through duties relating to fostering, resulting in sickness and leading to the carer being unable to foster, discretionary time limited payment will be considered through Wakefield's Finance Panel.

### **Annual Leave:**

All approved carers are entitled to take 2 weeks holiday during a 12 month period. In cases where a carer needs to take time off during the 8 week period and they are not in a position to foster, the holiday payment can be accessed if needed or the skill payment will be deducted for the proportion of time being taken off.

Many carers may decide not to take a block of 2 weeks holiday and will make the decision to have a number of short breaks. The Service will keep clear records of Break Away requests to ensure that they do not exceed the 2 week entitlement. For any holidays that exceed the 2 weeks, skill payments will be not made to carers. However, the Service does need to monitor the amount of respite request as this can have a detrimental effect on children and overall placement stability. Where any concerns are being raised as to the frequency that children are being placed in respite then this will necessitate a formal meeting with the carer and possibly an early review. Where possible we would always encourage carers to take children away with them and not use breakaway.

In cases whereby carers have a planned holiday and this limits the option of placing children prior to any holiday, as this would mean unnecessarily moving children again, the Service will utilise the carers for such provisions as day care or breakaway carers, therefore they must be available to foster just prior to any holiday.

### **Placement Endings:**

The Service does recognise that placements, at times, disrupt and can breakdown but we would ask that where possible 28 days' notice is given and that all support issues to maintain the placement have been explored.

There are occasions where carers decide to take a break following a child moving on from their care, due to adoption/rehabilitation move or in some cases where a serious disruption has taken place. In most cases this would not go beyond an 8 week period but in these circumstances all requests for a short break in placements must be discussed with the Fostering Team. The Fostering Team Manager/Service Manager will consider the request and reason for a carer taking a short break and if any retainer payments can be made. All such requests will go through the Finance Panel.

### **Breakaway Carers:**

Carers who are approved only for breakaway/ bridging placements or short break (Connect Scheme) will only get paid when a child is in placement. The allowance and the skill payment will be made for the duration of the placement. Once a child leaves your care all payments will cease. This also applies where any carer makes

a decision that they need to take a break from fostering but are able to provide breakaway placements. The skill payment will cease and any further payments will only be paid when a child is in placement.

Carers who amend their approval from breakaway carers to full time carers will only receive a payment once they have a child in placement.

### **Refusal of Placements:**

The Service makes concerted efforts to match children to placements and the skills of carers, however, there are occasions where emergency placements may have to be made and the priority is securing the needs of a child at time of placement. In cases where carers decline any placements that are within their terms and conditions of full approval and/or concerns are being noted that carers are regularly declining placements, then consideration will be given to requesting an early review to review the carers' approval and skill level. Please note that receiving the 8 week skill level retainer is based on carers being available to foster.

Every week the Service provides emergency cover for weekends and Bank Holidays and carers who have placement vacancies will be placed on the emergency list. In cases where carers refuse/decline placements then further discussions will be held to ascertain the reasons why they are unable to go on the list. In some cases payments may be stopped and further consideration may be needed surrounding the terms and conditions of approval.

### **Panel Approvals and Deregistration:**

Carers who are approved at Fostering Panel will not get a payment from the point of being approved by the Agency Decision Maker. Skill payments will start from the date they have a child in placement.

In cases where the Service recommends deregistration of a carer, due to practice concerns, this will be referred to the Fostering Panel and Agency Decision Maker (ADM) for consideration. Where the ADM agrees to deregistration you will be informed in writing of the decision and the skill payment will cease from the date of notification or earlier if this is beyond the 8 week retention period. In the event that the decision is overturned through an appeal process then the skill payment will be backdated from the date of the initial notification.

Where carers resign and have no children in placement the 8 week skill retainer will not apply. Payments will cease from the date the resignation is received. Please note that, in line with the regulations, once a written resignation is provided this cannot be retracted. In the event that a carer reconsiders their resignation, they must be re-assessed and go through the Panel process.

## **Connect Scheme:**

Any carer who wishes to transfer from the Connect Scheme will not automatically transfer on to Level 3 payments. Carers will have to be re-assessed against the skills competencies in order to match the appropriate skill level that is applicable to mainstream care. The Connect Scheme has a different remit and usually involves caring for children at weekends. The decision about the skill payment will go to the Finance Panel.

## **Allegations:**

Carers who are subject to allegations will receive their skill allowance for a period of 8 weeks. Should the investigation continue after this 8 week period the payments will then be reviewed every 8 weeks. Any decision to continue with the skill payment will be made at the Finance Panel and carers will be informed in writing. If payment is ceased as a result of the allegation process and the outcome of the investigation means no further action is taken, back dated payments from the date the payment was stopped may be considered by the Finance Panel.

## **Additional Information on Payments:**

Where a Care Plan has determined that a child needs a solo placement and the Service has to use carers that can take additional capacity, for example two or three children, then the carers will be provided with the additional per child payment as outlined in the financial section. This is because the placement will be essentially blocked for one child only.

Carers who offer 'Staying Put' placements for young people who have been in their care will also be entitled to receive the 8 week skill payment if they remain registered foster carers for Wakefield and continue to also foster children.

The Service and carers cannot cover all eventualities whereby carers may not be in a position to take placements. This could include building work to the home through to extended family illness. Each individual case must be presented to the Fostering Team Manager and Service Manager for consideration to establish if payments can continue. Any decision made will be provided in writing to the carer.

## **How do I demonstrate I have the skills?**

Often there will be specific training opportunities on offer, which will enable carers to demonstrate that they have learnt a number of skills and are able to apply these in practice. Available training will be provided each year, other means of evidencing the skill will be through discussion with supervising social workers related to examples where you have used the skill or demonstrated knowledge of the skill and its application. This will include on-line training, attending support groups, research articles, assisting with training and providing mentoring to other carers.

It is also vital that you keep records of any skills, knowledge and experience that are applied when caring for children in placement. This evidence will be the main source of any progression as you will need to outline why certain strategies were utilised such as:

- How adoption or rehabilitation plans were managed.
- What did you do to help a child move on positively.
- Supporting and managing children who go missing and/or are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.
- How you managed a Contact Plan and any issues with family members.
- Working with Care Plans.
- How you worked as part of a team or with other services/professionals.
- Ability to work with parents/care-givers.
- Positive behaviour management strategies.
- Caring for complex and challenging children.
- Supporting children with loss and separation and understanding the impact of this.
- Supporting children through making disclosures about abuse.
- Managing children who are excluded from education.
- Caring for children with health needs.

This is not an exhaustive list but provides an overview of the type of evidence that you will need to consider. All of this evidence will be recorded in a Personal Development Plan (PDP) which, when completed with your supervising social worker, will be used as a framework for identifying your competence as a foster carer.

All approved foster carers are responsible for maintaining their PDP and ensuring that they attend any training that is provided.

### **What is the route for progression?**

For newly approved foster carers the first 12 months of approval will be used as a benchmark for progression. If foster carers feel they meet the criteria to progress to the next achievable level, they should have a Personal Development Plan and be able to provide evidence of their training and learning. All new carers are subject to an annual fostering review and training and development will be discussed as part of the review process. It is not the function of the fostering review to agree to any change in progression but carers are able to identify, during the review process, a wish to progress to a higher skill level.

There is a skills workbook that needs completing and this is used as a framework to cross-reference the competencies that have been met. In addition to this you will also need to submit a testimony as to how you feel that you have met the required competencies for progression. Before any carer can progress, the Training, Support & Development Standards must be completed within 12 months of approval or 18 months for Connected Persons carers. A comprehensive report is also required from the supervising social worker/placement support worker.

The skill payment scheme relates to the skills, knowledge, experience and overall training and development that carers bring to fostering and/or develop over time. In order to progress through the skill levels carers must have undertaken either training opportunities or development opportunities. They must also be in a position to provide extensive evidence of their reflective learning and how they have applied this to their role as a foster carer and produce a written training portfolio or competency-based work book.

Please note that any skill payment that is agreed will not be paid until it has been fully signed off by the Finance Panel. The skill payment is not linked to the date that you submitted your supporting evidence; therefore there will be no back-dated payments. In some cases the matter may be deferred by the Finance Panel for further information, and again, the payment will not be back-dated to the date of the original Panel. The payment only commences once the progression has been agreed.

For carers who have achieved Level 1 and wish to progress to another skill level the same criteria for collating all evidence applies. Again this can be discussed at a fostering review process as carers can log their intention to progress but the fostering review cannot endorse the skill level a carer should receive. The review is used as a means of gathering the necessary evidence and reviewing the carers' abilities.

In some cases we accept that foster carers will have outside work commitments alongside the role of being a foster carer. However, it would be expected that a carer is available for a child for most of the time and not be over reliant on other people. Any approved carer who works is also responsible for attending training and ensuring that they are developing as a foster carer. Hours of work must be compatible with their fostering task and the level of need and required care of the child in placement. This needs to be discussed with your supervising social worker to ensure that you can meet the child's needs during times such as school holidays, illness or other unplanned absence.

We understand that some carers take difficult placements and start to build evidence for progression. However, in order to progress, particularly to Level 3, this cannot be based on an isolated case as you must be able to demonstrate that you have proven and established strategies in dealing with a number of children.

### **Maintaining the Skill Level:**

For all carers that progress through the skills levels it is vital that you maintain the expected requirements of each specific skill level. It needs to be acknowledged that when a carer progresses on to the next skill level this is based on evidence at that time and any training attended. Carers are responsible for maintaining their development as a foster carer and taking placements that reflect the level of skills and competency achieved. The evidence for maintaining the skill level will be reviewed on an annual basis, or earlier where any issues are being raised.

In cases where carers progress through the skill levels, particularly to Level 3, you will need to demonstrate that you have considered the expectations of the required

skill level. There will be greater emphasis placed on the expectations of Level 3 carers as the Service will expect Level 3 carers to take more complex children which match the skills and competencies that have been achieved. For carers who have birth children living at home, full consideration needs to be given to the impact that Level 2 and Level 3 placements will have on a birth child. In some cases Level 3 carers may need to come down a level if the impact on birth children is proving too difficult. However, in all cases of progression, the impact of fostering on the family will need to be explored before any progression is agreed.

In situations where carers are found to not be achieving/maintaining the required level of development via attendance at training and/or through their practice as a foster carer, an early fostering review will be held to consider the carers overall development and the evidential reasons why the skill level has not been maintained. Please note it is also the responsibility of the carer to continue to enhance their development. The Fostering Service will retain records of training and development opportunities and also record instances where training has not been available due to courses being full. However, there are a number of development opportunities that can be achieved through support groups, on-line training and research, so the availability of courses should not impact on how a carer maintains their skill level.

If a decision is reached to lower the skill level of a carer, the matter will be referred to the Finance Panel for a recommendation. The carer will be informed in writing of the decision of the Panel. The carer has the right to appeal this recommendation and written representations should be provided within 28 days to the Fostering Team Manager. The appeal will be referred back to the Finance Panel for a final decision and the carer has the option to attend or not. Once a final decision is reached this will be conveyed in writing to the carer and either the skill level will continue or the skill payment will be lowered.

In cases where concerns continue with regard to carers' abilities then a recommendation will be made to present the matter to the Fostering Panel to assess the carers' continued suitability. In some cases practice concerns and allegations are referred to Panel following a period of re-assessment or following a review of the carers' practice. In these cases the Agency Decision Maker can take the decision that a carer's skill payment should be lowered as part of the terms and conditions of continued approval.

### **Level 1 Foster Carers**

All Level 1 foster carers are paid the Fostering Allowance per child, plus a skill premium each week.

During the period of approval as a Level 1 foster carer (minimum of 12 months) the foster carer and supervising social worker should draw up a Personal Development and Training Programme. This should include outcomes of attendance at support groups and evidence related to the foster carer skills at Level 2.

All newly approved carers are subject to an annual review that is presented to the Fostering Panel during their first 12 months of approval. The review will make clear

recommendations as to the continued suitability of a carer. Within the review, the carers and supervising social worker can recommend a skill progression to Level 2 but all supporting reports must be submitted to the Finance Panel.

If a decision is taken that progression is not agreed, there must be specific recommendations as to what further work or evidence is needed in order to achieve progression.

## **Level 2 Foster Carers**

All Level 2 foster carers will be paid the Fostering Allowance per child plus a further skill premium each week.

During the period of approval as a Level 2 Foster Carer (usually around 24 months) the foster carer and supervising social worker should draw up a Personal Development and Training Programme. This should include, where possible, registering for a QSF (previously NVQ) course in caring, providing evidence for the portfolio of learning opportunities and outcomes, attendance at a minimum of 5 training courses, attendance at support groups and evidence related to the foster carer skills at Level 3.

Following a suitable period at Level 2, a skills workbook, supporting evidence and report from the supervising social worker should be prepared and presented to the Finance Panel to ascertain whether the Level 2 foster carer should progress to a Level 3.

If a decision is taken that progression is not agreed there must be specific recommendations as to what further work or evidence is needed in order to achieve progression.

## **Level 3 Foster Carers**

All Level 3 foster carers will be paid the National Minimum Allowance per child, plus a further skills premium each week.

Current Level 3 foster carers are expected to maintain their personal development to remain in Level 3 by attending training sessions each year and meeting any new requirements that arise as the scheme is reviewed.

All Level 3 carers are expected to meet the requirements and competencies for progression. This will mean taking more complex children and young people as determined by the skills, knowledge and experience of the carer. Where carers are not meeting the on-going requirements of Level 3 or declining placements, then the Fostering Team Manager will meet with the carers in the first instance to address the issues. Where no resolve can be found then an early review will be held.

The same process for progression applies, as all carers have to submit a skills workbook, supporting evidence report and comprehensive report from the supervising social worker.

## **So what are the competencies and skills required?**

### **Requirements for foster carers to achieve and maintain payments bandings:**

#### **Level 1 Foster Carers**

- Level 1 foster carers will meet requirements approved as foster carers.
- Level 1 foster carers will attend support groups.
- Level 1 foster carers will draw up a Personal Development and Training Programme and maintain a portfolio of personal development.
- Level 1 foster carers will attend at least 5 training sessions per year.
- Level 1 foster carers will undertake CWDC/TSD (Training Standards Development for Foster Carers). This needs to be completed within 12 months of approval for mainstream carers and within 18 months for Connected Persons carers.
- Level 1 foster carers must be registered on-line for training and have completed agreed modules as identified through the PDP.

#### **Level 2 Foster Carers**

- Level 2 foster carers will have progressed through the process above.
- Level 2 foster carers will attend support groups.
- Level 2 foster carers will draw up a Personal Development and Training Programme and maintain a portfolio of personal development.
- Level 2 foster carers will attend at least 5 training sessions per year.
- Level 2 foster carers will apply, where possible, for a place on a QSF Training programme.
- Level 2 foster carers will be registered on-line for training and have completed agreed modules as identified through the PDP.
- Level 2 foster carers will have achieved CWDC/TSD for Foster Carers and completed the associated workbook.
- In some cases foster carers may have already undertaken a period of caring with another agency or have occupational experience or qualifications that meet all the requirements for Level 2. The assessing social worker and Team Manager will make a recommendation to the Finance Panel for immediate appointment at Level 2 in those circumstances, if appropriate.

#### **Level 3 Foster Carers**

- Level 3 foster carers will have progressed through the process above.
- Where possible Level 3 foster carers will have achieved, or be in the process of, achieving the Level 3 QSF in caring or an alternative occupational qualification.
- Level 3 foster carers will attend at least 5 training sessions per year. This will include a number of mandatory courses with a particular reference to Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI).
- Level 3 foster carers will attend support groups.

- Level 3 foster carers will draw up a Personal Development and Training Programme and maintain a portfolio of personal development.
- Level 3 foster carers will be registered on-line for training and have completed agreed modules as identified through the PDP.
- Level 3 foster carers should be prepared to assist social workers in Support Groups and recruitment campaigns.
- Level 3 foster carers will need to have developed, through experience and training, a range of skills in contributing to an assessment of a child's needs, and present this information accurately within the child's care planning and statutory review process. Also, to be able, creatively, to assist the child's participation in his/her care planning and review process.
- Level 3 foster carers are required to provide support to less experienced carers e.g. mentoring/supporting new carers. And/or assist in helping deliver/contribute to training events and/or support group sessions.
- In some cases, foster carers may already have undertaken a period of caring with another agency or have occupational experience or qualifications, which meet all the requirements for Level 3. The supervising social worker and Team Manager will make a recommendation to the Finance Panel for immediate appointment at Level 3 in those circumstances, if appropriate.

## **BAAF Fostering Competencies:**

### **1. Caring for Children**

- 1.1 An ability to provide a good standard of care to children which promotes healthy, emotional, physical, sexual and intellectual development throughout childhood and into adulthood.
- 1.2 An ability to accept the individual child as he/she is.
- 1.3 An ability to provide care appropriate to the individual child as he/she is.
- 1.4 An ability to work closely with children's families, and others who are important to the child.
- 1.5 An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical or other inappropriate punishment.
- 1.6 Knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to, and communicate with, children appropriate to their emotional age and understanding.
- 1.7 An ability to promote a young person's development towards adult status.

## **2. Providing a Safe and Caring Environment**

- 2.1 Able to ensure that children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.
- 2.2 An ability to help children keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.
- 2.3 An ability to recognise the particular vulnerability to abuse and to discrimination of disabled children.

## **3. Working as Part of a Team**

- 3.1 An ability to collaborate with other professional workers and to contribute to the Department's planning for the child/young people.
- 3.2 An ability to communicate effectively.
- 3.3 An ability to keep information confidential.
- 3.4 An ability to promote equality, diversity and rights of individuals and groups within society.

## **4. Own Development**

- 4.1 An ability to appreciate how personal experiences have affected themselves and their families, and the impact that fostering is likely to have them.
- 4.2 An ability to use people and links within the community to provide support.
- 4.3 An ability to use training opportunities to improve skills.
- 4.4 An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.

### **Wakefield Competencies and Skill Sets:**

Skills at Level 2 and 3 are additional to skills at the previous levels.

#### **1. An ability to provide a safe and consistent good standard of childcare, emotional, physical promotion of health and safety. Aimed at encouraging the full potential of each child to be developed (Competency 1.1)**

##### **Level 1**

- Able to understand the importance of an early health assessment if children are entering care.

- Able to understand the child's assessment and care plan and be able to recognise the specific needs of the child as recommended.
- Able to discuss with the supervising social worker and the child's social worker how these can be met in the foster family and implement the plan.
- Able to work with the child's social worker in promoting health through ensuring registration with a GP and dentist and attending all medical appointments.
- Able to provide an environment that promotes health issues in every day care including healthy eating and personal hygiene.
- Able to recognise the symptoms of normal childhood illnesses and to seek professional help and treatment when required.

### **Level 2**

- Able to understand the child's health and development needs and identify support that might be required, with the supervising social worker. Work towards a plan for meeting the child's specific needs within the foster family.
- Able to implement the plan to help children develop more appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent and enabling them to cope with their emotions appropriate to their age.
- Able to meet the needs of children in poor health and/or moderate disability. An ability to monitor the child's health, together with health professionals, attending all medical appointments, and following a "healthy eating" routine.
- Able to recognise obvious signs of alcohol, solvent or drug misuse.
- Able to understand how healthy care can promote and protect the sexual health of young people.

### **Level 3**

- To have evidenced and proven childcare experience, for example, parenting, childcare and/or fostering experience, residential care, Nursery nurse or nursing experience and to hold or work towards a recognised qualification.
- Able to meet the child's health needs and actively promote a programme of "healthy eating" and healthy living.
- Able to meet the needs of children with more severe health or personal care needs or disabilities, which require special care programmes.
- Able to engage with children and young people whose behaviour places them at risk of harm.
- This will include working with children who go missing and/ or at risk of child sexual exploitation.
- Able to provide opportunities for children and young people to develop personal and social skills to enable them to maintain their own health and well-being now and in the future.

## **2. An ability to promote good attendance at school and encourage children to fulfil their potential (Competency 1.1)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to liaise with the child's school and know who the key staff in school are, e.g. Head, SENCO and designated teacher.
- Able to appreciate the importance of education for looked after children.
- Encourage a positive approach to homework and learning by providing quiet space/time to encourage homework production.
- Able to demonstrate knowledge of the organisation of the Wakefield School System and range of education provision available including the REACH Team.
- To ensure the child gets to and from school safely and on time and support the young person to achieve 100% attendance.
- Able to appreciate the importance of evening and school events to monitor the child's educational progress.
- Able to pass on any concerns regarding education to the child's social worker and the REACH Team.

### **Level 2**

- Able to advocate effectively for the child and to challenge schools where appropriate.
- Able to provide assistance, support and to know how to access additional resources e.g. the REACH team where required.
- Able to work with teachers to address particular learning needs or behavioural difficulties in school.
- Able to demonstrate knowledge of the importance of extra-curricular and leisure activities both in and out of school.

### **Level 3**

- Able to resolve most difficulties which may arise from time to time in school and, if necessary, be able to support a child excluded from school.
- Able to demonstrate a thorough knowledge of WMDC Schools' policies and procedures in relation to school admissions, attendance and exclusion.
- Demonstrate a clear understanding of the key role of education (including Higher & Further Education) in determining outcomes and life chances for looked after children.
- Able to work with the social worker to consider appropriate schools (e.g. attending open evenings) and ensuring that an admission preference form for starting High School is completed on time. Seeking guidance where required.
- Able to demonstrate an understanding of Key Stage Levels and expected levels of attainment.

**3. An ability to communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding to help develop their language skills (Competency 1.1 and 1.6)**

**Level 1**

- Able to understand how play, singing and reading can help a child to develop their language and communication skills.
- Able to implement a programme of language and speech development.
- Able to demonstrate that children and young people's views on matters affecting them are solicited and taken into account.

**Level 2**

- Able to work alongside and encourage children to improve confidence in language skills through access to appropriate Family Learning courses.
- Able to access Family Learning within schools to develop the skills and knowledge to assist the child as they progress through school.
- Able to use play to help children develop their speech and language skills and general self-expression.
- Able to help children to contribute to their own care plan and reviewing process.
- Able to understand the child or young person's perspective and communicate that understanding.
- Able to use active listening with an upset child or young person when appropriate.

**Level 3**

- Able to work closely with other professionals in carrying out a therapeutic programme of speech and language development, including accurate recording of progress and feedback.
- Able to access a child or young person's feelings in situations of stress for them and communicate that understanding.
- Able to demonstrate an understanding of the different levels of communication when working with children with a learning disability.
- Aware of the impact of verbal and non-verbal communication.

**4. An ability to accept the child as he/she is (Competency 1.2)**

**Level 1**

- Able to make the child feel welcome, relaxed and valued within the foster family.

**Level 2**

- Able to make the child feel welcome, relaxed and valued within the family quickly, using special routines or strategies where necessary or appropriate.

### **Level 3**

- Able to establish a nurturing atmosphere for children who may be mistrustful of adults due to experiences and will push carers away.

## **5. An ability to understand the impact of past events on a child and an ability to help children to develop an understanding of themselves and their past, including culture, race, religion and language (Competence 1.2)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to understand the role of information in helping the child to understand what is happening to them.
- Able to begin to collect material for the child's Life Story Book from the day the child comes to live with them, for example, photographs, personal possessions or objects, awards for achievements.
- Able to store such materials appropriately and have the ability to present the information in an age appropriate format.

### **Level 2**

- Able to undertake Life Story Book and direct work with the child in respect of their past.
- Able to undertake, with the help of the child's social worker, a chronology of the child's life.

### **Level 3**

- Able to mentor a Level 1 foster carer in undertaking Life Story Book. Work with a child and/or be able to undertake Life Story Book work with a child not in their direct care, or with a sibling group.

## **6. An ability to help children deal with their sense of loss resulting from their change of carer (Competency 1.2 and 1.3)**

### **Level 1**

- An understanding of normal reactions to separation and an ability to understand that loss affects some children deeply, and can have a detrimental effect on their behaviour.
- Able to recognise and accept the resulting behaviour.
- Willing to access Family SEAL to Positive Parenting to develop an awareness of how loss affects some children impacting on their behaviour.

### **Level 2**

- Able to help children and their families to cope with loss and bereavement.
- Able to recognise the stages of loss, understand the behaviour patterns and to respond to these appropriately with support.

### **Level 3**

- A good understanding of the stages of loss and an ability to recognise when a child requires therapeutic intervention because of loss or bereavement.
- Able to work with other professionals in implementing a programme of therapy in the foster home.

## **7. An ability to involve/support those people with parental responsibility and people significant to the child in their work on a day-to-day basis (Competency 1.4)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to understand and empathise with the role of a parent whose child has been removed from their care.
- Able to feedback information about the child's daily life in an appropriate manner where birth parents are acting reasonably in the interests of the child.

### **Level 2**

- Able to form a relationship with the child's parents or people with parental responsibility whereby they can liaise about events in the child's daily life directly.
- Able to establish a working relationship with birth parents and other relatives where there exists an atmosphere of mistrust while continuing to act in the best interests of the child, as representatives of the local authority

### **Level 3**

- Able to form a supportive relationship with the child's parents or people with parental responsibility.
- Able to "model" a parenting style and the parent to learn new methods of childcare and behaviour management from the foster carer.
- Able to establish strategies from working with birth parents and other relatives where it has not been possible to establish a working relationship, while continuing to act in the best interests of the child as representatives of the local authority.

## **8. To allow and encourage those people with parental responsibility to have a high level of contact with the child in their own homes (if appropriate and safe for the child) and ensure a non-judgemental approach (Competency 1.4)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to understand the importance of maintaining the child's contact with people with parental responsibility or people that are significant to the child.

- Able to facilitate contact within the foster home, if appropriate, and adopt a welcoming and non-judgemental approach to visiting adults and children.
- Able to record significant issues arising during contact.

#### **Level 2**

- Able to understand the importance of contact in a child's life and to positively encourage it.
- Able to help the child to prepare physically and emotionally for contacts and to help the child to work through their feelings after contact.
- Able to record the contact sessions for feedback to the people with parental responsibility and the child's social worker.

#### **Level 3**

- Able and willing to supervise those contact visits where it is not deemed safe or desirable for contact to occur without a third party, and where it cannot happen in the child's current placement address.
- Able to record and feedback any significant issues raised by the contact including any concerns about the relationships between the child and the people having contact.

### **9. An ability to understand and acknowledge that the foster family as a whole has a role in meeting the needs of a child in placement (Competency 1.4 and 4.1)**

#### **Level 1**

- Able to provide opportunities for children to develop positive relationships with adults and children both within the foster family and with the wider family and friends' network.

#### **Level 2**

- Able to provide opportunities for children to develop positive relationships with adults and children both within the foster family and with wider family and friends' network.
- Able to encourage the child to become an active participant in community activities and sports.

#### **Level 3**

- Able to provide opportunities for children to develop positive relationships with adults and children both within the foster family and with wider family and friends' network.
- Able to encourage the child to become an active participant in community activities and sports, and to work with the activity organisers to accept the child and their needs.

**10. An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour without the use of physical chastisement or inappropriate punishment (Competency 1.5)**

**Level 1**

- Able to, in discussion with the supervising social worker and child's social worker, set appropriate boundaries and implement them together with a reward system for good behaviour.
- Able to manage the child's behaviour on a day-to-day basis.

**Level 2**

- Able to identify appropriate boundaries, consequences of actions and reward systems, in discussion with the fostering support worker, and an ability to implement them appropriately, and manage the child's behaviour.
- Able to help children learn the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, managing the child's negative reactions and repetitive, unacceptable behaviour and encourage positive behaviour patterns.

**Level 3**

- Able to recognise difficult and challenging behaviour and devise a behaviour management programme and implement it appropriately, effecting positive changes in the child's behaviour.
- Able to work closely with other professionals in recognising trigger factors and carrying out therapeutic programmes, skill development, behaviour management programmes or educational programmes with the child.

**11. To have knowledge of normal child development and an ability to recognise unusual behaviour or behaviour outside the normal range (Competence 1.6)**

**Level 1**

- To have an understanding of the normal stages of development and an ability to access, together with social workers and health care professionals, whether a child is developing within the normal development ranges.
- Able to listen to a child to ascertain their wishes and feelings appropriate to their age and understanding.

**Level 2**

- To have a good understanding and knowledge of the stages of development and be able to assess a child's interrupted development.
- To be able, with consultation, to devise a varied and appropriate routine for the child which addresses the special areas of developmental need and help the child regress and experience those areas that are missing.

- Able to use different methods of communication to ascertain a child's wishes and feelings.

### **Level 3**

- To have an in-depth understanding and knowledge of the stages of development.
- Able to access a child's interrupted development and devise a programme, in consultation with the fostering support worker, to address the special needs and implement a programme to enable the child to re-experience the missing stages.
- Able to use different methods of communication including reflective listening to ascertain a child's wishes and feelings.

## **12. An ability to contribute to the plan for the child including an ability to contribute to an assessment and to help to prepare a child for moving on, whether that is a return to home, to a permanent family or a move to independence (Competence 1.7)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to form a working relationship with the child's social worker and to keep them fully informed of events and developments in the child's life.
- Able to provide information that can be included in assessments and plans.

### **Level 2**

- Able to undertake direct work together with the social worker and with the child to prepare for a move.

### **Level 3**

- Able to undertake direct work with the child under the supervision of the social worker to enable the child to move on positively, whether to return home to a relative, to a permanent family, or moving on to independent living.
- To show a willingness to keep in touch with the child after moving on to contribute to the child's understanding of what has happened to them.

## **13. An ability to provide a healthy and safe environment (Competence 2.1)**

### **Level 1, 2 & 3**

- A full health and safety check to be carried out annually in conjunction with the fostering support worker.
- To have all fuel appliances checked annually and install smoke alarms.
- To keep a First Aid box in a locked cupboard and have basic knowledge of First Aid.

**14. An ability to keep children in their care safe from harm or abuse and enable the child to develop strategies to keep themselves safe from harm or abuse (Competence 2.1 & 2.2)**

**Level 1**

- Able to develop an awareness of the indicators that a child may have suffered from neglect or abuse and an ability to manage that within the home with support.
- Able to create, with the supervising social worker a “Family Keeping Safe Plan” and implement it.

**Level 2**

- Able to recognise the indicators that a child may have suffered from neglect or abuse and an ability to manage that within the home.
- Able to create a “Family Keeping Safe Plan” and implement it within the home.
- Able to deal with disclosures of abuse from a child with confidence.

**Level 3**

- A knowledge and experience of dealing with indicators of abuse in a fostering role.
- Able to deal with disclosures of abuse from a child with confidence, and to offer support to other foster carers who may not be experienced in this area.

**15. An ability to recognise the vulnerability of Looked After Children to abuse and discrimination (Competence 2.3)**

**Level 1**

- A basic understanding of Child Protection Procedures and ability to work within them.
- An awareness of the risks presented by some children to members of the family unit, friends and neighbours and the ability to seek support.
- Able to work with other agencies.

**Level 2**

- A good understanding of Child Protection Procedures and ability to work within them.
- An ability to deal with the risks presented by some children to members of the family unit, friends and neighbours and the capacity to seek support and adapt safe care strategies to the needs of the child.

### **Level 3**

- An in depth knowledge of Child Protection Procedures and an ability to work within them with other professionals and agencies.
- Able to implement strategies to reduce the risks presented by some children to family members, friends and neighbours.
- Some knowledge and understanding of the techniques and strategies of people known to be a risk to children.

## **16. An ability to work within a written agreement, including the undertaking of specific tasks (Competency 3.1)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to understand the nature of the written agreement and to feel confident in contributing to it, including the undertaking of specific tasks.

### **Level 2**

- Able to observe and access a child's progress.

### **Level 3**

- Able to observe and access a child's progress and to feedback both verbally and in writing to contribute to a child's care plan.
- Able to advocate on a child's behalf and to undertake specific tasks with the child as identified in the agreement.
- Able to feel confident in challenging a professional's view in a positive manner where there is a disagreement.

## **17. An ability to participate in and contribute to meetings, statutory reviews and Court appearances as appropriate. (Competence 3.1)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to, with support from the fostering support worker, participate in informal and formal meetings.
- To attend court if required with the support of a social worker or mentor.

### **Level 2**

- Able, following discussion with the supervising social worker, to participate and contribute, verbally and in writing, to informal and formal meetings.
- To attend court if required with support.

### **Level 3**

- Able to record a daily event diary for the child and the ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

**18. An ability to keep records/diary of information in respect of each child in their care and complete incident reports in respect of concerning incidents. To report any incident of inappropriate behaviour or language on the part of themselves or any other foster carer immediately to the fostering support workers (Competence 3.2)**

**Level 1**

- Able to record a daily event diary for each child, that includes both positive achievements and behavioural issues, and to share this with the child's social worker and the fostering support worker.
- To have an awareness of personal behaviour and language and the impact on and the consequences for the child.

**Level 2**

- Able to record a daily event diary for the child, to complete reports for statutory reviews and care planning meetings and to contribute to Court reports and contact plans for Court.
- Able to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

**Level 3**

- Able to record a daily event diary for the child and the ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.

**19. An ability to work with other professionals as part of a team and to work within the departmental policies and procedures (Competence 3.2)**

**Level 1**

- Able to see themselves and others as part of a team working together in the best interests of the child.
- Able to refer appropriately to the Foster Carer Manual and have an understanding of the Departmental policies and procedures.
- Able to keep the school and/or head teacher appropriately informed at times when a child or young person is experiencing particular difficulties.

**Level 2**

- An ability to participate fully as a member of the team working in the child's best interests.

**Level 3**

- To maintain an awareness of current legislation and its implications for fostering.

**20. An ability to contribute to the Foster Carer Annual Review (Competence 3.2 and 4.1)**

**Level 1**

- In discussion with the supervising social worker, provide information, both verbally and in writing, to contribute to the Foster Carer Review.
- Evidence of work undertaken throughout the year should be included in addition to feedback about training undertaken and the impact it has had on their practice.

**Level 2**

- An ability to provide, with assistance from the supervising social worker, a contribution to the Foster Carer Review.
- Evidence of the work undertaken throughout the year should be included in addition to feedback about training undertaken and the impact it has had on their practice. Feedback from children's social workers should be included.

**Level 3**

- An ability to provide a written report as the contribution to their own review. This should include comments from other family members.
- Evidence of the work undertaken throughout the year should include identifying learning opportunities and outcomes, in addition to feedback about training undertaken and the impact it has had on their practice.
- Feedback from children's social workers should be included and commented on the foster carers plan for development. The next year should also be included.

**21. An ability to understand the nature of working in a confidential manner and keep information about the child and the child's family private and confidential (Competence 3.3)**

**Level 1**

- Able to understand and observe the local authority confidentiality requirements.

**Level 2**

- Able to actively promote confidentiality in support groups and training groups and be able to challenge other carers.

**Level 3**

- Able to actively promote confidentiality in support groups and training groups and be able to challenge carers and other professionals.
- Able to train other carers in respect of issues of confidentiality.

**22. An ability to work with children in an anti-discriminatory manner  
(Competence 3.4)**

**Level 1**

- Able to respect and treat people equally irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, disability or special needs.

**Level 2**

- Able to challenge appropriately to ensure that foster care practice is anti-discriminatory and respects all children and their families.

**Level 3**

- Able to challenge appropriately and to integrate anti-discriminatory practice into all their work.
- Able to actively promote diversity, and research a child's cultural and ethnic background to help the children have a positive identity.

**23. An ability to understand their own strengths and limitations and to seek help and advice accordingly.**

**Level 1**

- To agree to take part and contribute to regular supervision sessions with their fostering support worker.
- To be willing to accept and understand the value of a mentor.

**Level 2**

- Able to plan, in conjunction with the fostering support worker, a programme of supervision to promote personal development.
- To be willing to accept a mentor and also be willing to act as a mentor to new foster carers.

**Level 3**

- Able to undertake a self-skill assessment and to direct their own learning.
- To act as a mentor for less experienced carers and offer support on a formal basis.
- To offer support to carers being investigated because of an allegation.

**24. An ability to use people and links within the community (Competence 4.2)**

**Level 1**

- An ability to produce, together with the support Social Worker a list of resources and telephone numbers for the foster carer to access if required for support.

**Level 2**

- Able and willing to offer support to other foster carers informally.

### **Level 3**

- Able and willing to offer support to other foster carers, both formally and informally.

## **25. An ability to learn new skills and develop skills using the training attended and to integrate the new skills into their practice. To attend a minimum of 5 training sessions annually (Competence 4.3)**

### **Level 1**

- Able, together with the supervising social worker, to identify personal training needs.
- Willing to attend training sessions as identified in the Personal Development Plan.
- Able to apply the skills learnt on training into their practice with support.
- Able to access Family Learning appropriately, for support in national adult literacy and numeracy strategies taught in schools.
- Able to evidence learning in a portfolio.

### **Level 2**

- Able and willing to contribute to the training of other carers.
- Willing to register for the National Vocational Qualification in Health and Social Care (Children and Young People) Level 2
- Able to understand his/her own feelings to support children in their care e.g. with use of Family SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning).
- Willing to improve computer literacy or promote opportunities to assist the child in learning through information technology.

### **Level 3**

- Able to achieve the National Vocational Qualification in Health and Social Care (Children and Young People) Level 3.
- Able to identify own training needs and undertake further formal learning to address them.
- To attend all identified training and be able to take a lead role in training other carers.

## **26. Attend Support Groups (Competence 4.3)**

### **Level 1**

- Able to understand the need for and value of support groups and attend regularly.
- To attend a minimum of 5 support groups meetings per annum.

### **Level 2**

- To assist at support groups regularly.
- To attend a minimum of 5 support groups meetings per annum.

**Level 3**

- To assist at support groups regularly and, in conjunction with the agency, take a lead role in recruitment events.
- To facilitate a support group with a worker from the fostering team where needed.
- Attend a minimum of 5 support groups meetings per annum.

**27. An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.****Level 1**

- Able to form working relationships with all local authority workers.
- Able to identify, with the support of the supervising social worker, areas of stress and identify coping mechanisms and management strategies.
- To commit to sharing any family problems that may have an impact on the fostering role with the supervising social worker.

**Level 2**

- Able to identify their own areas of stress and with the supervising social worker identify or develop coping mechanisms and management strategies.

**Level 3**

- Able to form positive working relationships with all local authority workers as a member of the Childcare Team.