



## **Wakefield Fostering Service Skills Payment Scheme 2023 / 2024**

This document serves as Wakefield's policy and guidance for all approved foster carers on the skills payment scheme and for all applicants seeking approval as a foster carer.

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

Wakefield Children and Young People's Services recognise that family-based care offers significant advantages in terms of outcomes for children and young people in care. 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 children and young people in care.

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 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 carers.
- All schemes are integrated into one comprehensive scheme including families and friends, breakaway carers, foster carers for children with special needs and mainstream care.
- Progression through the levels is by the way of a Progression Report completed by the carer with support from the SSW and signed off by the Fostering Team Manager and Service Manager via a Progression Panel that meets monthly.



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

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 childcare experience in a regulated setting, transferable skills from other care settings and relevant qualifications.

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 and these are used in conjunction with Training, Support and Development Standards (TSD) for Foster Carers. 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 Fostering'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 4 skills levels 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 the Service Manager once a Progression Report has been submitted for consideration.

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

All approved Connected Person 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. Any Connected Person carer wishing to progress from level one must have attended and completed the Skills to Foster Training and completed their Training, Support and Development Standards.

In some cases, Connected Person 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. All Connected Person carers will join the skill payment scheme at the entry level.



Once approved the Service has the same expectations of Connected Person 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 Person 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 4.

#### **Level 1:**

Level 1 carers will receive a set skill amount of £53. This level is our entry level to foster care. Most carers will join the Service at this level unless they are able to fully demonstrate the competencies needed to commence the scheme at 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 £133:

- Plus £133 for a second placement and all subsequent placements

#### **Level 3:**

Level 3 carers will receive the set fee of £239:

- Plus £239 for a second placement and all subsequent placements

#### **Level 4:**

Level 4 carers will receive the set fee of £477.

- Plus £239 for any additional children that are placed.
- 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 will be for carers who have significant childcare experience and or formal qualifications in a related



childcare profession, have the ability to reflect upon practice and link this to the Fostering task work and within a multidisciplinary team. 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 / foster care as determined by the care plan, and by remaining with the current carer, has provided placement stability.

The Service PACE scheme is also paid at Level 4. This is as a result of both the statutory and complex nature of placements. PACE carers are not part of the normal skill progression process as assessment and Approval is separate to mainstream Fostering

### **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.
- Facilitating and transporting to contact.
- Working with Care Plans.
- How you worked as part of a team or with other services/professionals.
- Ability to work with parents/caregivers on contact or rehabilitation plans.
- 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 and medical needs.
- Mentoring and supporting other foster carers either newly approved or existing carers who need additional support.
- Supporting on recruitment and retention events.

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. Before any carers can progress, the Training, Support & Development Standards must be completed within 12 months of approval or 18 months for Connected Person carers. A comprehensive Progression Report is also required from the carer with support from the supervising social worker. This must be submitted along with an updated carers Personal Development Plan.

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.

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 any 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. The service is not able to fund after school clubs or nurse provision to cover work hours as this must be considered as part of the Fostering assessment.

We understand that some carers take difficult placements and start to build evidence for progression. However, in order to progress, particularly to Level 3 and 4, 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. Other pathways to progression include providing permanence to children / young people who are harder to place and caring for our more complex children and young people.

### **Panel Approvals and De-registration:**

Carers who are approved at the 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 the de-registration 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 de-registration you will be informed in writing of the decision and the skill payment will cease from the date of notification.

In cases where a re-assessment of a carer is required due to standards of practice concerns or a change in carers circumstances, consideration will be made as to any continuation of payments during the assessment process.

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 re-considers their resignation, they must be re-assessed and go through the Panel process. In cases where a carer resigns and has children in placement the payment will cease from the date the children move placement.



### **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 an additional payment in line with the level 4 scheme. This is because the placement will essentially be blocked for one child only.

There may be circumstances whereby carers find themselves caring for children with more complex and challenging needs, which is not reflective of the current skill level as this may require more time and demands being placed on carers that was not initially anticipated when a placement was made. In these circumstances the service is able to consider paying a carer an enhanced fee to meet the requirements of a higher skill level. However, there must be evidence through Care Plans, reviews and supporting reports from social workers that justifies the reasons for the enhanced payment. All payments of this nature must be agreed through the Resource Panel and the enhanced payment will be agreed to a named child(ren). In the event that a child leaves your care or the placement ends then the payments will cease and you will return to your substantive skill level.

Foster carers will still be encouraged to continue progressing with their skill level report to support any higher skill level in the future.

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.

### **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. 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 through attendance at training and support groups. 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.

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 the Fostering Panel following a period of re-assessment or following a review of the carers' practice or where strategy meetings have been held. In these cases, the Service and 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.

## **Progression**

### **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 for mainstream carers and 18 months for Connected Person carers) 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 Progression Panel for review and agreement. Carers who wish to progress to level 2 must have completed the Skills to Foster Training and the Training, Support & Development Standards

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 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 Progression Report should be prepared and presented to the Progression 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 Fostering Allowance per child, plus a further skills premium each week.

Current Level 3 foster carers are expected to maintain their personal development to remain at 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.

#### **Level 4 Foster Carers:**

The Level 4 skill payment relates to the skills, knowledge, experience and overall training and development that carers bring to the Fostering Service and/or develop over time. In order to progress through the skill levels to Level 4, 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 workbook. Any carer wishing to progress will be invited along with their supervising social worker/support worker to attend the Skills Progression Panel. This provides carers with an opportunity to present their evidence before members of the Panel.

The Panel will consist of the Fostering Service Manager, the Head of Service and the Fostering Panel Advisor. 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 Progression Panel for further information, and again, the payment will not be backdated to the date of the original Panel date. Please note that any skill payment that is agreed will not be paid until it has been fully signed off by the Progression Panel. The payment only commences once the progression has been agreed. You will be informed in writing of the agreement that has been reached by the Progression Panel.

All Level 4 foster carers will be paid the Fostering Allowance per child, plus a further skills premium each week.

Current Level 4 foster carers are expected to maintain their personal development to remain at Level 4 by attending training sessions each year and meeting any new requirements that arise as the scheme is reviewed.

This scheme will require carers to take more complex and challenging children for example, this will involve children who are being stepped down from residential care and need a Fostering placement or children who require intensive support. This



scheme also requires carers to be involved with Service development, training and mentoring of other carers.

Where carers are not meeting the on-going requirements of Level 4 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, an early Foster Carer Review will be held and this, along with a short report recommending skill level will be submitted to the Progression Panel for Review. Carers will be invited to attend along with their SSW and the Fostering Team Manager.

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

**Level 1 Foster Carers entry requirements:** - Have some experience of childcare e.g., parenting / looking after other's children.

- 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 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 Person 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:** - Have experience of childcare e.g., parenting / looking after other's children / paid or voluntary work in childcare / previous Fostering experience (six months minimum)

- Level 2 foster carers will have progressed through the process above.
- Completed the Skills to Foster Training.
- 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 be registered on-line for training and have completed agreed modules as identified through the PDP.
- Level 2 foster carers will have achieved TSD for Foster Carers and completed the associated workbook.



- In some cases, foster carers may already have undertaken a period of caring with another agency, have caring or occupational experience or qualifications, which meet all the requirements for Level 2. In these circumstances, the assessing social worker and Team Manager can make a recommendation for immediate appointment at Level 2 and present this to the Progression Panel for approval.

**Level 3 Foster Carers:** - Evidence significant childcare experience e.g., parenting / looking after other's children / employment in (paid or voluntary work) childcare or related experience e.g., nursing, youth work, teaching / ability to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the Fostering task / previous Fostering experience (at least 2 years) and ability to take more challenging children with more complex needs

- Level 3 foster carers will have progressed through the process above.
- 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 will provide care for the more complex of Wakefield children and sibling groups.
- 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. In these circumstances, the assessing social worker and Team Manager can make a recommendation for immediate appointment at Level 3 and present this to the Progression Panel for approval.

**Level 4 Foster Carers:** - Significant formal childcare experience e.g., previous Fostering 3 years minimum including children with complex needs / employment in childcare or related experience e.g., nursing, youth work, teaching. Ability to reflect upon professional experience and relate this to the Fostering task

- Level 4 foster carers will have progressed through the process above.
- Level 4 foster carers should be prepared to assist social workers in Support Groups and recruitment campaigns.



- Level 4 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 4 foster carers will attend support groups.
- Level 4 foster carers will draw up a Personal Development and Training Programme and maintain a portfolio of Personal Development.
- Level 4 foster carers will be registered on-line for training and have completed agreed modules as identified through the PDP.
- Level 4 foster carers will provide care for the more complex of Wakefield children and sibling groups.
- Level 4 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 4 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 4. In these circumstances, the assessing social worker and Team Manager can make a recommendation for immediate appointment at Level 4 and present this to the Progression Panel for approval.



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

Any carer progressing through Level 2 and 3 competencies must be able to evidence the competencies at the previous levels and that they meet all the requirements of each level.

### **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.**

#### **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 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, teaching or teaching assistant, 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. Such as tube or peg feeding.
- Working with families where children have special needs and carers are actively engaged in supporting families with a planned move home.
- 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 recognise obvious signs of alcohol, solvent or drug misuse in older children or signs of children being affected by issues relating to this.
- 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. (a) This section is specific to children of school age: An ability to promote good attendance at school or educational provision. (Please provide evidence and examples)**

### 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 children and young people in care.
- 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 Virtual School.
- 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 Virtual Schools.
- Support younger children in the home.

### **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 Virtual Schools 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 children and young people in care.
- 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. (b) Encourage all children to fulfil their potential regardless of age and understanding. An ability to communicate with children appropriate to their age and understanding to help develop their language skills. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

**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 where age appropriate.
- 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 crisis or trauma 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 understand the impact of past events on a child and an ability to help children develop an understanding of themselves and their past, including culture, race, religion and language. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

**Level 1**

- Able to make the child feel welcome, relaxed and valued within the foster family.
- 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.
- 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.
- Able to respect and treat people equally irrespective of their age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, disability or special needs.

**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.
- Able to make the child feel welcome, relaxed and valued within the family quickly, using special routines or strategies where necessary or appropriate.
- 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
- Able to challenge appropriately to ensure that foster care practice is anti-discriminatory and respects all children and their families.



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

## **5. An ability to help children deal with their sense of loss resulting from their change of carer regardless of the age of the child. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

### 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 necessary support or training to Positive Parenting to develop an awareness of how loss affects some children impacting on their behaviour.

### Level 2

- Ability to support 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.
- Ability to reassure children who have been separated from their significant care giver.



**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.
- The ability to work and support children through with different Attachment styles and have the ability to fully support children with associated behaviours and triggers.

**6. An ability to involve/support those people with parental responsibility and people significant to the child. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

**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.



**7. 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 (please provide evidence and examples).**

**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.



**8. An ability to set appropriate boundaries and manage children's behaviour without the use of physical chastisement or inappropriate punishment. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

**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.

**9. To have knowledge of normal child development and an ability to recognise unfamiliar behaviour or behaviour outside the normal range and what the reason for this might be. (How do you apply this in your role, please provide examples).**

**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 assess 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.

## **10. 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. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

### 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.



- Work with professionals, services and permanent carers on plans for adoption or reunification home.

### 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.

## **11. An ability to recognise the vulnerability of Children in care to abuse and discrimination. 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. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

### 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.
- 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

- 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.
- 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

- 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.
- An in depth knowledge of Child Protection Procedures and an ability to initiate any necessary process through professionals or services.
- 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.

## **12. An ability to participate in and contribute to meetings, written agreements, statutory reviews and Court appearances as appropriate. (Please provide evidence and examples)**

### Level 1

- Able to, with support from the Fostering support worker, participate in informal and formal meetings.
- Able to understand the nature of the written agreement and to feel confident in contributing to it, including the undertaking of specific tasks.
- 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.
- Able to observe and assess a child's progress and feel confident to report on this verbally and in writing.



### 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.
- Able to observe and assess 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.

**13. 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. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

### 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.



**14. An ability to work with other professionals as part of a team and to work within the departmental policies and procedures. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

**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.
- To be able to apply the legislation to practice standards.

**15. An ability to fully contribute to the Foster Carer Annual Review, Have a clear understanding of your role in the review and any significant household members. Understand the purpose of the review and the areas that it will cover. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

**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.

## **16. 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. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

### 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.
- Report any data breaches as required.



**17. An ability to understand their own strengths and limitations and to seek help and advice accordingly using both informal and formal supervision**

**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.

**18. 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**

**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 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.

## 19. Attend Support Groups and contribute to discussions being held

### Level 1

- Able to understand the need for and value of support groups and attend regularly.

### Level 2

- To assist at support groups regularly.

### Level 3

- The ability to contribute and in some cases facilitate support groups.
- Support the service in sourcing regular speakers to the groups.
- Contribute to the group and share areas of knowledge and expertise about practice.

## 20. An ability to provide a healthy and safe environment

### 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.



### 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.

### **21. An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of conflict and/or disagreements. (Please provide evidence and examples).**

#### 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.
- To work across multiple disciplines to support placement stability.

### **Wakefield Competencies and Skill Sets for Level 4:**

One approved carer in the household must have a full time commitment to Fostering with no other paid work commitments outside the Fostering service.

Must be able to provide specialist foster care in one or more key areas:

- Parent & Child
- Large sibling groups
- Assessment placements
- Planned Permanency for challenging children and young people



- Children with Disability
- Children having experienced significant disruption / placement breakdowns
- Placements linked to the Youth Justice system
- Emergency Placements for challenging children and young people
- Placements for young people with particularly challenging behaviours where residential placements may be the alternative

### **Requirements in addition to levels 1, 2 and 3:**

- Achieve sustained high level work with specialist health services for children and 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 childcare planning
- Provide commitment to specialised placements of children / young people with the most complex needs e.g.: Parent / Child; Assessment; Remand; Permanence; Children with a disability; Children / Young People having experienced significant disruption; Single placements in the household; Children / Young people who might otherwise require a residential placement
- Provision of Emergency placements (including Out of Hours) and those required at short notice
- Management of persistently challenging and anti-social behaviours of children / young people placed
- A 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
- 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 your 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
- Actively support and encourage 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 e.g., compiling CV's / application forms