**Guidance and Procedures for Completion of the Training, Support and Development Standards Workbooks for Foster Care, Short Break Care and Connected Care**

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# **About This Document**

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| Title | Guidance and Procedures for Completion of the Training, Support and Development Standards Workbooks for Foster Care, Short Break Care and Family and Friends Care |
| Purpose | **Guidance for Supervising Social Workers and process for extensions** |
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# **Version Control**

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| Date Issued | Version | Summary of Changes | Created by |
| September 2015 | **4.0** | **Updated guidance for SSW and foster carers embedded in document** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| September 2015 | **4.1** | **Agreement for CWDC co-ordinator to agree extensions up to one month without the agreement of the service manager where there are no particular concerns re non-compliance**  | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| August 2018 | **5.0** | **Updated guidance doc for SSW and carers and have included it as an appendix rather than embedded** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| August 2018 | **5.1** | **Update of terms used** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| May 2022 | **6.0** | **Updated guidance document (Appendix 1)** | **Rosemarie Cronin** |
| May 2022 | **6.0** | **Updated language/roles in the document and checked for Accessibility**  | **Rosemarie Cronin** |

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# Introduction and Legal Framework

* 1. All Foster Carers, Short Break Carers and Family and Friends carers are expected to complete the appropriate Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards. The aim of this work is to ensure that all these groups of carers are given and have the appropriate knowledge, understanding and information to enable them to carry out the important role that they have. Children and young people should achieve better outcomes if those who are caring for them are equipped with the knowledge and skills that they require.
	2. Standard 20 of the NMS for Fostering (2011) states:

20(2) All foster carers, including all members of a household who are approved foster carers, are supported to achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care. Short break carers who are approved foster carers are supported to achieve the Training Support & Development Standards for Short Break Carers. Family and friends foster carers are supported to achieve the Training, Support and Development Standards for Family and Friends Foster Carers.

20(3) Foster carers can evidence that the Training, Support and Development Standards have been attained within 12 months of approval (or within 18 months for family and friends foster carers). For foster carers who were approved as such before April 2008, the Standards are attained by April 2011 (or by April 2012 for family and friends foster carers). Fostering households may use the same evidence workbook.

* 1. The Guidance and Regulations for Fostering Services (2011) state:

5.70 Foster carers should be supported to maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio which demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them. The foster carers must be able to evidence the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care, within the timescales specified in standard 20. Fostering couples may evidence the Standards in one workbook.

# Essex Procedure for Completion of Training, Support and Induction Standards

* 1. As part of their assessment foster carers will have met some of the competencies within the Training Support and Development Standards workbook. At the end of their assessment process, they should be provided with a cross referencing sheet to confirm which of the requirements from the standards they have met.
	2. The Supervising social worker role is to work alongside the carers to ensure that the carers have all the relevant information to evidence the relevant requirements.
	3. Written guidance is available for all carers and supervising social workers to give additional information regarding expectations of completed books (*see Appendix 1*).
	4. Workshops facilitated by SSW’s in the quadrant teams are available for foster carers. This is to help carers to understand what is expected of them in completing this work.
	5. If there is more than one carer in the home all registered foster carers must evidence the requirements within the standards required. If the second carer is unable to evidence certain requirements, it should be clearly documented and signed off by the supervising social worker (SSW) as to why the carers could not meet this outcome.
	6. SSW to sign of all the standards for each of the carers when they are satisfied that the carer has met the appropriate requirements..
	7. When signed off by the SSW workbooks should be sent to the Panel Advisor who quality assures the books and signs off as the agency representative.
	8. When workbooks are signed off, they are returned to the SSW who should keep a copy of the signed certificate to place in the foster carer file. The workbooks should be returned to the foster carer.
	9. The SSW should update the foster carers training record with the date that the TSD workbook has been signed off..

# Non-Completion of the Training, Support and Development (TSD) Standards

* 1. If carers are unable to complete within the expected time scales it is the responsibility of the allocated SSW to request an extension and undertake one of the following processes.
	2. **Extension requested due to exceptional circumstances.**
	3. If a carer is unable to complete the Training, Support and Development standards within the expected time scales and extension for a longer period for completion can be agreed by the Fostering Panel Advisor. Extensions can be given in the following circumstances:
* Exceptional and unexpected personal circumstances such as bereavement, ill health and personal crisis.
* Foster carer experiencing difficulties with literacy/language skills.
* A significant period without a placement.
* Complex placement issues such as disruption or an allegation.
* Extensions for up to one month where there are no concerns re non-compliance.
	1. If an extension is agreed, it will be for a specific time and the Panel Advisor keeps a record of any extensions given. SSW’s should record the agreement on the foster carer file.
	2. **If there is not a specific reason for non-completion or an extension is not agreed the following process should be undertaken.**
1. SSW to discuss circumstances of the non-completion with the Team Manager
2. A report detailing the circumstances is sent to the Service Manager responsible for fostering, this should include proposals, actions and timescales for completion.
3. The relevant quadrant Service Manager for the fostering teams should review proposal with supervising SSW/Team Manager and can agree a deferment.
4. Service Manage/SSW to inform the Panel Advisor of the agreed timescale.
5. Panel Advisor to keep record of extensions agreed.
6. SSW writes to the foster carer(s) outlining the terms of the deferment and a copy of this letter is kept on the carers file.

# Appendix 1 - Guidance for Foster Carers/Short Break Carers for the completion of the Training, Standards and Support Standards Workbooks

Guidance for Foster Carers/Short Break Carers for the completion of the Training, Standards and Support Standards Workbooks

The aim of the Training, Development and Support workbook is for you to show that you have the relevant skills and knowledge as foster carers/short break carers. You will be able to show evidence of this through your practice and the knowledge that you have gained. You may do this through a number of ways which can include: personal learning and development, training courses, supervision sessions, consultations with Psychological services, reviews (for children and yourselves), reading etc

There are 3 TSD workbooks which are available on the Department for Education website <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/guidance-for-foster-carers> or your assessing social worker/supervising social worker will be able to provide it for you. The Government sets the timescales for these to be completed which are as follows:

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| --- | --- |
|  | Time to complete |
| Short Break Carers | 12 months from approval |
| Foster Carers | 12 months from approval |
| Family and Friends carers | 18 months from approval |

The workbooks can be completed on a computer or can be printed so you can hand write if you find that easier.

**Please note that the foster carer workbook is in two parts** and you will need both. One is a guidance document which includes the requirements that you are expected to evidence. The other document is the evidence workbook which is where you write or type your evidence. **Both the Short break book and the family and friends book have all the information in one document.**

All workbooks will have some guidance and information in them as well and you should read through this to help you to understand what is expected. This guidance has been written to provide you with some further guidance about expectations in Essex and to alert you to potential pitfalls. I hope that it helps you through this process and hopefully clarify some of the questions you may have.

Each fostering quadrant run their own workshops to support foster carers to complete the TSD workbooks. This support is in addition to your own SSW. If you wish to attend workshops talk to your SSW who will be able to tell you when workshops are available.

**General information and expectations**

* If there are two carers in the household it is expected that both carers complete all parts of the workbook. If there is an area that one carer cannot cover, the reason for this should be written in the workbook. Both sets of evidence can be written in the same book and you may find that a lot of evidence is joint.
* If you are completing a joint book you should make it clear that the evidence is joint or which carer is providing the evidence. This is very important so it clear to those who are looking at them to know how both carers have contributed.
* The layouts of the workbooks are similar but there are some differences. The important one is for you to be sure what information you are supposed to be showing that you know! All books have key standards, The Foster Carer workbook has 7 main standards, the Short Break workbook and Family and Friends workbook both have 6.

Within these standards there are two different sections. **The Foster Carer and the Family and Friends** books have sections under ‘Skills and Knowledge’ and then underneath that are evidence requirements. **As foster carers you need to show that evidence for the criteria under the ‘Skills and Knowledge’ heading. The evidence requirements under this are linked to the skills and knowledge requirement and may well give you practical ways of showing the evidence. However, if you do answer the evidence requirement always go back and check that by doing so you have covered all the areas in the skills and knowledge section.**

The **Short Break Workbook** is laid out slightly differently. Under the headings of each of the standards it a list of criteria/requirements that you are required to evidence. Underneath this there are ‘questions and activities’. You do not necessarily need to answer the ‘questions and activities’ but they may help you to think about how you will evidence the criteria above them. If you do go for answering questions for some of them always check back to the criteria above them and check that you have covered all the areas that are in the question.

For consistency I will refer to the criteria that you are expected to evidence as requirements for the rest of this document.

**Starting the workbook – evidence from assessment process**

* When you start the book – your assessing social worker should have given you a cross reference sheet. This will show you sections of the workbooks that you have already shown evidence of during your assessment process. There is a different sheet for each of the books so make sure you have a book and cross reference sheet that match! This is a great start and you should be encouraged by how much is already completed. As this has already been assessed, all you need to do is include the cross-reference sheet with your workbook and write in the appropriate sections of your workbook e.g. 1.1a – completed through the assessment process. The evidence you have met during this process should be joint (if applicable).
* When completing your evidence, it is useful to make it clear which requirements you are giving evidence for so, for example, just put a, b, c etc on the page under the section and then make sure you have written something for each of them. That is also a good way of making sure you haven’t missed any of the requirements and helpful for your SSW’s to be clear about where the evidence is.

**Completing the rest of the book**

* Always look carefully at the wording of the section you need to evidence. For example, some will say ‘Demonstrate’ in which case you should be able to provide something that shows you have been able to do what is being expected of you. Others will say ‘Be aware of’ in which case you need to write something that will show your awareness of what you need to do – even if you haven’t done it!
* Be aware that some of the criteria ask for more than one thing so make sure you have covered all the areas required.
* **Remember this is an induction workbook.** It is not a diploma or NVQ and you do not need to write essay answers, a few sentences under each criteria should be able to cover it. **What is important is that you are showing your understanding, knowledge etc so make it personal to your experiences.** Examples are often helpful as it shows you have understood what is expected. **Some of the requirements are a bit wordy – and if you unclear as to what is expected then ask!**
* Do not use children’s real names as evidence. You can use initials if you feel you need to. This is to ensure confidentiality of children and young people’s personal information.
* It is best not to put evidence in the portfolio that includes any identifying information about the children. If you do want to use this as evidence then you can show it to you SSW so they can see it and sign if off and as long as it is cross referenced you do not need to actually include it with the workbook. .
* Some of the criteria you will have covered as part of your discussions with your supervising social in supervision. If this is already recorded in your supervision – you do not need to write it again – just put discussed in supervision and the date.
* If you have gathered resources (e.g. books, leaflets, printed information from the internet or policies) that have helped you towards meeting the standards you do not need to include this as evidence – keep these for your own information. Evidence in the portfolio should be evidence of your work and your understanding of information that you have read
* If you are wishing as part of your evidence to put in a reference e.g. foster carer handbook or a book you have read. You should also write something else to show your understanding of what you have read.
* Similarly, if you have completed training courses, reading, e-learning etc you will need to be able to show your SSW that you would be able to put **your learning** from this into practice and make this clear in the book. For example, so you could have a discussion with your SSW in supervision and write in the book the date of the discussion as it should then be recorded on your supervision notes or give an example of how you have put it into practice that meets the requirement.

**Role of the SSW**

* Each of the requirements within the standards needs to be signed off by your supervising social worker. Before doing this, they should be clear that all carers in the household have met each of the requirements and have either provided the evidence for this in the book – or referenced where it can be found e.g. supervision, or child’s review report. To do this your SSW will need to look at each of the requirements and consider if the evidence you have provided is adequate. As a result of this they may come back to you to discuss additional information to be required or they may also add their additional comments to the workbook.
* Some supervising social workers may do this as you go along whereas others may choose to look at it all at once when the book is completed. Whichever way the workbooks should be part of supervision discussions and if you are having difficulties in any area of it you can ask.

**Final Sign Off**

* Once your supervising social worker has assessed the evidence in the workbook and is confident that all the requirements in each of the standards is evidenced and all the carers in the household have fully met each of them. They will finalise their signing off. The workbooks are then sent for final sign off by the Fostering Panel Advisors) who are responsible for signing off all the workbooks across the county. This is for quality assurance purposes to make sure that the same minimum standard is being applied to all workbooks by the SSW’s who are signing off each of the requirements.
* Once the workbook has been signed off it will be returned your SSW who should return it to you. You will also receive a certificate and a letter to confirm your completion. Keep it safe as this is your evidence that it has been completed should it ever be required.
* If there is any area where it is considered some further evidence is required, you will be told which areas and given some further time to complete. Do not panic……..the point of doing this is for you to show you have met the requirements and for us as a service to ensure that you are guided to and have the information you need to do the complex role that is expected of you as carers.

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