



Reading Children's Services

Foster Carer Fee Scheme

Information for Foster Carers

☐ For decision ☐ For discussion ☒ information

SUMMARY

This document provides details of Reading Children's Services' Foster Carer Fee Scheme and the associated competency and training requirements on foster carers and progression process

OWNER

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Introduction

Reading Children's Services (RCS) pays foster carers a fee in addition to a child maintenance allowance.

Foster carer fees are paid in recognition of the skills, experience, time, and commitment involved in caring for foster children/young people, and in recognition of the demands that working in partnership with the fostering service, the professional team around each child/young person, and birth families makes on carers. Fees are also paid in recognition of the fact that some carers (in particular kinship foster carers) may need to cease or reduce their previous employment in order to meet the demands of fostering. For these carers, foster carer fees are considered to provide a level of financial recompense for loss of income. If carers can demonstrate that their actual or anticipated average loss of monthly income is or will be greater than the total fee payments that they do or will receive, they **may** be able to receive an additional weekly or monthly allowance to help them to bridge the gap.

If a foster carer already receives a 'loss of income' payment and this is paid at a higher rate than the weekly fee payment for their skill level, they will **not** receive an additional Skill Level Fee; however, their previous loss of income payment will instead be paid in two parts, one reflecting the Skill Level Fee that a carer at their skill level would ordinarily receive, and one being a reduced loss of income payment; the two payments together will **equal** their previous loss of income payment.

The carer fee is **only** paid when there is a child/young person in placement i.e., from the start of a placement until the placement end date.

The carer fee is paid in accordance with RBC's Carer Fee Levels (detailed below). When two or more children/young people are in placement with a carer at the same time, 50% of the carer fee is paid for the second or third child/young person, i.e.:

- If one child is placed the carer will receive: Foster carer fee x 1 + child allowance x 1
- If two children are placed the carer will receive: Foster carer fee x 1.5 + child allowance x 2
- If three children are placed the carer will receive: Foster carer fee x 2 + child allowance x 3

The term 'foster carer' refers to the 'fostering household', whether this is a single carer or a couple.

Reading Borough Council's (RBC's) foster carer fee scheme enables foster carers to be paid higher fees as they progress in their fostering careers and gain more skills and experience relevant to the fostering role. Each fee level has associated competency and training requirements associated with that fee level.

In order to **progress** from skill level 1 to skill level 2 **or** from skill level 2 to skill level 3 foster carers are required to:

- Have fostered for at least the minimum period required for progression to the intended skill level (see details below)
- Demonstrate that they have met **all** of the training requirements for the level that they are applying to advance from (including any refresher training that may be required)
- Demonstrate that they have fully met the competencies associated with the skill level that they are applying to advance from

- Demonstrate a commitment to undertaking **all** of the training requirements for the level that they are applying to progress to within 12 months of progression
- Demonstrate that they have the potential to meet the competencies associated with the skill level that they are applying to progress to within 12 months of progression

In order to continue to be paid a foster carer fee at **any** skill level, foster carers are required to at **their first and all subsequent** foster carer annual household reviews:

- Demonstrate that they have met **all** of the training requirements for the foster carer skill level to which the fee that they are receiving is linked.
- Demonstrate that they are fully meeting the competencies associated with the foster carer skill level to which the fee that they are receiving is linked.

All foster carers who receive a foster carer fee are **required** to maintain an ongoing training and development portfolio that demonstrates how they are meeting the skills required of them (linked to the fostering National Minimum Standards (NMS) and the DfE Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDS)).

There is an expectation that **all** approved foster carers will **at all times**:

- Provide safe care for the children placed with them and as far as possible protect them from harm.
- Be committed to maintaining positive working relationships with the fostering service, and with the social worker(s) for the child(ren) placed in their care and with the other professionals who are part of the team around the child(ren).
- Be respectful and non-judgemental in their approach towards, and dealings with, the parents and wider birth family members of the child(ren) placed in their care.

If carers do not continue to meet the competencies and/or training requirements for the fee level that they have been receiving, they will **usually** be moved to a lower fee level. This will mean that if they have been paid a Skill Level 1 fee, they will no longer receive a fee if they do not continue to meet the regulatory requirements of a foster carer¹. Any consideration of this will be recorded as part of their Foster Carer Household Review and agreed by the appropriate Fostering Team Manager and Agency Decision Maker. Depending on the circumstances, the carer's review may also be presented to the Fostering Panel for consideration.

¹ **Note:** Where a carer has been receiving a foster carer fee at Skills level 1, 2 or 3 and they then fail to continue to meet the competency and training requirements associated with the fee level, depending on the reasons for this, they **may** be given a period of time in which to complete the outstanding training or to demonstrate the required competencies before their fee level is dropped or their fee payments stopped; however, this can **only** be agreed by the ADM Fostering and will be dependent on it being reasonable to expect that any shortfall can be made up within a maximum of 12 weeks from the date of the foster carer's household review (at which the short-fall was identified).

Skill Level 1

This base level fee applies to those foster carers who meet the competencies for this level and will ordinarily be paid to RBC mainstream foster carers and respite foster carers who are starting on their fostering careers, and to kinship foster carers (who are approved by RBC), **provided that** they meet the competencies and/or training requirements.

Mainstream foster carers can also decide that they do not want to move through the Skill Level structure and can then from choice remain as Skill Level 1 foster carers.

Training requirements

Mainstream foster carers:

All mainstream foster carers are required to attend Skills to Foster training as part of their initial preparation / approval process. They are also required to attend an induction day in their first year of approval (ideally within the first 3-months) and to complete Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDS).

In addition to this mainstream foster carers are required to complete a total of 14 additional trainings by the time of their first Annual Foster Carer Household Review (i.e., within 12 months of being approved to foster). Given this it is usually expected that prospective carers will aim to complete 7 of these mandatory trainings in the preparation period, so as to reduce the training demand on them in the first 12-months following approval, when they will likely have a foster child(ren) placed in their care for some or all of the time.

Please note: While the Skills to Foster Training is face-to-face group training which covers 3 full days, most other trainings required at Level 1 are short courses lasting 2-3 hours, or a maximum of one day.

Kinship foster carers:

Kinship foster carers are **not** required to attend Skills to Foster training, but they **are** required to attend an induction day in their first year of approval (ideally within the first 3-months). They **are also** required to complete Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDS), however, they have 18 months in which to complete TSDS training.

In order to meet the requirements to receive a Skill Level 1 foster carer fee, kinship foster carers will be required to also:

- Meet **all** of the additional training requirements of a mainstream foster carers
- As detailed above, meet the full range of competencies expected of mainstream foster carers, including providing at least weekly written records detailing key information about the child(ren) placed in their care, and promptly informing the child(ren)'s social worker(s) of any significant incidents.

It is accepted that kinship foster carers are usually subject to a much quicker foster carer assessment than mainstream foster carers, and it is recognised that they may also be caring for the child (ren) for whom they are being assessed as carers whilst the assessment is ongoing. Given this, it is accepted that they may not have the availability to complete 7 of the mandatory trainings (as mainstream foster carers are ordinarily expected to) during the preparation and assessment period.

In recognition of this, kinship foster carers will **not** ordinarily receive a Skill Level 1 foster carer fee from the point of their approval (under Regulation 24) and a child(ren) being placed in their care; however, if they complete the required trainings **within 16 weeks** of approval (under Regulation 24), they will then be paid a fee which will be backdated to the date of their first approval. If the required training is not completed within the first 16 weeks, but all 7 courses are subsequently completed, a fee will then be paid from the date that the last of these trainings is completed (but payment will **not** be backdated).

Skill Level 1 Training		Timescale for completion
Skills to Foster	Requirement	During Stage 1 of approval process
Paediatric First Aid	Mandatory	Should be completed within the preparation period, prior to approval. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 3 yearly
Safeguarding	Mandatory	Should be completed within the preparation period, prior to approval. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 3 yearly
Safe use of medication	Mandatory	Should be completed within the preparation period, prior to approval. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 3 yearly
Health & safety	Mandatory	Should be completed within the preparation period, prior to approval. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 5 yearly
Fire safety	Mandatory	Should be completed within the preparation period, prior to approval. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed 5 yearly
Record keeping (trauma informed)	Mandatory	Should be completed within the preparation period, prior to approval. One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.
GDPR	Mandatory	Should be completed within the preparation period, prior to approval. Must be completed within 12 months and refreshed annually.

Immediately following approval		
Induction Day	Requirement	Ideally complete within 3 months (mandatory within 12 months)
Within the first 12 months of approval		
Training, Support & Development Standards (TSDS)	Requirement	On-line training. Family & Friends carers to complete within 18 months, other carers within 12 months
Equality & diversity	Mandatory	One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.
Unconscious bias	Mandatory	One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.
Child development	Mandatory	One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.
Understanding Attachment & Loss	Mandatory	One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.
Effective Communication with children	Mandatory	One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.
Positive behaviour	Mandatory	One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.
Delegated Authority	Mandatory	One-off training to be completed within 12 months of approval to foster.

Competencies required – Skill Level 1

Competencies	Associated NMS	Associated TSDS Mainstream carers	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
Caring for children			
The ability to provide a good standard of care to children which promotes healthy emotional, physical, sexual and intellectual development and helps build self-esteem.	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 12	3, 5	2, 4, 5
An ability to accept individual children for who they are and to ensure their wishes and feelings are known.	1, 2	1, 5	4

Competencies	Associated NMS	Associated TSDS Mainstream carers	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
The ability to ensure that children are cared for in a clean and welcoming home, where consideration is given to creating a personalised and age-appropriate bedroom.	10	3	1, 2, 4
An understanding of the importance of Life Journey work and an ability/willingness to contribute to this.	2, 6	2, 5	4
To ensure that children have access to community activities.	7, 12	5	1, 4
The ability to work closely with each child's family and others who are important to the child.	2, 9	2, 6	3, 4
The ability to encourage and support positive behaviour through setting and maintaining appropriate boundaries, and to manage children's behaviour within these, without the use of physical chastisement or other inappropriate behaviour.	3, 4, 5	5, 6	1, 2
A knowledge of normal child development and an ability to listen to and communicate with children at a level appropriate to their emotional age and understanding.	1, 2, 4, 6	4	3, 4
An ability to promote a young person's development towards adulthood and appropriate independence.	12	5	1, 4
An ability to work/live with cultural difference, and to demonstrate and maintain a non-judgmental and anti-discriminatory approach in all dealings with (and communication about) children in care and their families.	2	1, 2, 6	1, 2, 4
Providing a safe and caring environment			
An ability to ensure that children are cared for in a home where they are safe from harm or abuse.	4, 10	3, 6	2, 5
An ability to help children to keep themselves safe from harm or abuse, and to know how to seek help if their safety is threatened.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	3, 5, 6	1, 2, 5

Competencies	Associated NMS	Associated TSDS Mainstream carers	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
An ability to recognise the particular vulnerability to abuse/exploitation of looked after children/young people.	1, 3, 4, 5, 12	5, 6	1, 2, 5
Working as part of a team			
An ability to collaborate with other professionals and to contribute to Reading Children's Service's planning for children/young people.	2, 4	2, 6	1, 3, 5
An ability to communicate effectively.	1, 2, 4	4	3
An ability to keep information confidential.	3	1	1
To make yourself available for regular supervision meetings with your supervising social worker.	2, 21	2, 7	1
An ability to promote equality, diversity and the rights of individuals and groups within society.	2	1	1
An ability to record key information about children/young people and to ensure that this is shared with their social workers in a timely manner.	1, 6, 26	2, 4	1, 3
Own development			
An ability to appreciate how your personal experiences have affected you and your family and the impact that fostering is likely to have on you and your family members (if applicable).	13	1, 7	6
An ability to use people and links within the community to provide you with support.	21	1, 2, 7	3, 6
An ability to use training opportunities and improve skills.	3, 20,	7	6
An ability to sustain positive relationships and maintain effective functioning through periods of stress.	3, 4	1, 2, 4, 7	1, 3, 6

Skill Level 2

Carers who wish to move from Skill Level 1 to Skill Level 2 and to receive the associated level 2 fee, will have to have:

- Been fostering for **a minimum of** 12 months and to have had a fostered child(ren) placed in their care for at least 2/3 of this time, i.e., **at least** 244 days.
- Completed **all** the mandatory and required training for Level 1.
- Demonstrated that they have been able to **consistently** fully meet the competencies expected of a Skill Level 1 foster carer.

They will also be expected to demonstrate:

- A commitment to undertaking **all** of the training requirements of a Skill Level 2 foster carer **within 12 months** of progression ([See Appendix 1 for foster carer\(s\)' evidence sheet](#))
- That they have the potential to meet the competencies associated with Skill Level 2 **within 12 months** of progression.

The decision as to whether or not progression to Skill Level 2 is agreed will be made as part of the foster carer household review process:

- The foster carer(s)' household review will be presented to the Fostering Panel for a recommendation regarding the carer(s)' ongoing approval and progression to Level 2.
- The ADM Fostering will then consider the Panel papers, the Panel minute and the Panel recommendation, and will confirm whether or not progression to Skill Level 2 is agreed.

Some new applicants may meet the requirement to enter the structure at Skill Level 2 and this will be covered in their assessment. Applicants entering at Skill Level 2 will need to demonstrate the same quality of care, equivalent training and sufficient experience to complete Training and Development Standards (TSDS) during their assessment.

Training requirements

Skill Level 2 Training		Timescale for completion
Moving a child to permanency	Required	Must be completed by carers moving infants/young children to long term placements
FC Toolbox Foundation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma & Empath [Training content to be confirmed]	Required (to maintain Skill Level 2 / progress to Skill Level 3)	Within 12 months of approval as Skill Level 2 carer(s)
FC Toolbox: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention seeking behaviour • Anger • Hyper activity • Disassociation 	Required (to maintain Skill Level 2 / progress to Skill Level 3)	Within 12 months of approval as Skill Level 2 carer(s)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control • Lying & Allegations • Sexualised behaviours • Difficult sibling relationships • Self-harm • Turbulent teenage years [Training content to be confirmed]		
Other training	Further training to be discussed and agreed with the carer(s)' Supervising Social Worker (SSW) at regular intervals	

Foster carers will have been assessed as having demonstrated that they can provide the quality of care for this level and will be able to meet the needs of children placed with them.

It is expected that Skill Level 2 foster carers will be required to evidence that they continue to meet the competencies and requirements required of Skill Level 1 foster carers as well as meeting those expected of Skill Level 2 foster carers. This will be discussed/explored during the Annual Household Review, and carers will need to evidence their compliance. On-going personal development is an **essential** requirement to remain at Skill Level 2.

Competencies required - Skill Level 2

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDs	Associated TSDs F&F Carers
Caring for children			
The ability to improve outcomes for children/ young people when they have complex needs. (Foster carers will need to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to do this).	1-9, 12	1-7	1, 2, 4, 6
An ability to encourage children to develop appropriate social behaviour, helping them to become more independent and improve emotional regulation and literacy.	3, 12	3, 4, 5, 6	1, 4
An ability to help children develop basic aspects of memory, thinking, imagination and manipulative skills through play, reading, conversation and other activities.	2, 3, 6, 7, 8	4, 5	1, 4

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDs	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
A developed understanding of the vulnerability of looked after children to forms of exploitation. The ability to help a child/young person to keep themselves safe.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 5, 6	1, 2, 4, 5
An ability to help children develop their language skills and general self-expression. To help them to attain their educational potential and to support them for periods when they may not be in school.	1, 2, 7, 8	2, 4, 5	1, 4, 5
An ability to plan for and provide an appropriate routine which meets the child's needs and improves outcomes to help the child meet developmental milestones.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	3, 4, 5	1, 2, 4, 5
Able to work closely with birth families and others who are important to the child, and to support both family time plans and the child if this is part of the care plan.	2, 9	2, 6	1, 3
An ability to help children and families cope with loss and bereavement resulting from life threatening illness or separation through adoption or loss of their family.	1, 2, 3, 6	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 3, 4, 5
An ability to observe and assess children, clearly recording progress and any other aspects of significance and passing these records / this information on as required.	1, 4	2, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 5
Able to work in the best interests of the child in helping their transition to permanence (return home, long term care, adoption).	3, 4, 12	4, 5	N/a
Providing a safe and caring environment			
An ability to observe and respond appropriately to the possibility of child abuse and neglect.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	5, 6	3, 5
An ability to observe and assess children, clearly recording development and anything else significant to the child.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	2, 4, 5, 6	3, 4, 5
An ability to appropriately challenge practice in order to ensure that it is anti-discriminatory in its approach and respects all children and their families.	2, 4	1, 6	3, 4, 5

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDs	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
An ability to provide regular good quality, detailed recordings, identifying areas where the child has made progress and developed new skills as well as detailing significant events for the child to contribute to the life book.	1, 4, 26	4, 5, 6	1, 3
Working as part of a team			
An ability to work closely with other professionals, sharing information, exchanging skills and working under the guidance or in collaboration with others involved with the child.	4	2, 6	1, 3
Confident in attending and contributing to a range of meetings and able to work closely with others to improve the outcomes for the child.	4	2, 4, 6	1, 3
Own development			
To maintain a personal development plan, attend training and apply the learning to improve your own practice.	20	7	6
To refresh mandatory training every 3 or 5 years (as required). To attend post approval training and complete some self-directed learning as agreed with your supervising social worker.	20	7	6
To prepare for supervision with your supervising social worker and follow through on agreed actions.	20	7	6

Skill Level 3

This level applies to foster carers who have the necessary experience to care for children with additional needs or more complex behaviour. This may include foster carers who have a professional qualification relating to working with children / young people, or transferable skills from another setting.

Skill Level 3 foster carers will have substantial childcare experience and a firm commitment to their own learning and development.

Carers who wish to move from Skill Level 2 to Skill Level 3 and to receive the associated level 3 fee, will have to have:

- Been fostering for a minimum of 3 years (2 years if they were first approved as Skill Level 2 carers)
- Completed all the mandatory and required training for Skill Level 2.
- Demonstrated that they have been able to consistently fully meet the competencies expected of a Skill Level 2 foster carer.

They will also be expected to demonstrate:

- A commitment to undertaking **all** of the training requirements of a Skill Level 3 foster carer **within 12 months** of progression
- That they have the potential to meet the competencies associated with Skill Level 3 **within 12 months** of progression.

Progression to Skill Level 3 is **not** automatic. Foster carers will need to have:

- A positive Foster Carer Household Review (completed within the previous 3 months) which confirms that the carer(s) have fully met the competencies and requirements of Skill Level 2 carers, and which evidences that they potentially have the knowledge and skills to meet the competencies and requirements of Skill Level 3 foster carers.

The carer(s) will **also** be required to complete a portfolio detailing /evidencing:

- How they have met all of the competencies required of Skill Level 2 foster carers

and

- How they have the potential to meet the competencies required of Skill Level 3 foster carers.

Applications for progression will be considered by the Fostering Progression Panel, which will consist of:

- One or both of RBC's Fostering Team Managers (Mainstream and Kinship)
- The ADM Fostering
- The RBC/BFFC Service Manager for Children Looked After (LAC)

Panels will be held quarterly with panel dates set 12 months ahead.

Note: Where foster carers are fostering as a couple, **both** partners will be expected to contribute to the portfolio and **both** partners will be required to attend the Panel when their application to progress to Skill Level 3 is considered.

The Head of Service with management responsibility for the Fostering Service will make the final decision in respect of the carer(s)' application after considering:

- The Foster Carer Household Review
- The Panel papers (including the foster carer(s)' portfolio)
- The minutes of the Panel discussion
- The recommendations of the Panel.

Foster carers will need to evidence that they meet the competencies requirements for Skill Level 3 (including Skill Levels 1 and Level 2) **and** will need to agree to:

- Accept placements where the needs of the child require a Skill Level 3 carer.
- Regularly (on at least a bi-monthly basis) contribute to RBC Foster Carer recruitment initiatives (accepting the care needs of any child(ren) placed in their care).
- On a rota basis, contribute to co-leading Skills to Foster training for prospective foster carers and/or facilitate the running of one or more Reading based foster carer support groups (excluding FCAR), and/or contribute to RBC's Foster Carer 'Buddy' Scheme by 'buddying' one or two recently approved / less experienced foster carers.
- When no child is placed, be available to provide support to other foster carers, including transporting children (e.g., to school, family time, and/or medical appointments) and supporting children who are excluded from school and/or providing other short periods of day care for fostered children when their usual carers are not able to be available to care for them.

Note: A pro-rata hourly or daily Skill Level 3 foster carer fee will be payable when Level 3 foster carers provide any such support.

Skill Level 3 carers are expected to be available to care for a child at any time i.e. any employment that they may hold will have to not prevent them from caring for a child when they are requested to do so.

Training requirements

The training identified at Level 2 must have been fully completed and all mandatory training should be maintained up to date.

Skill Level 3 Training		Timescale for completion
Fostering Toolkit [Training content to be confirmed]	Requirement	To be confirmed
Trauma informed	Requirement	To be confirmed

[Training content to be confirmed]		
Child Exploitation training [Training content to be confirmed]	Requirement	To be confirmed
PACE training (6-week course)	Requirement	To be confirmed
FC Toolbox: Advanced (C&G certificate course) [Training content to be confirmed]	Requirement	To be confirmed
Other training	Further training to be discussed and agreed with the carer(s)' Supervising Social Worker (SSW) at regular intervals	

Competencies required - Skill Level 3

Foster carers must meet the competencies as set out in Skills Levels 1 and 2, plus the following:

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDs	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
Caring for children			
The ability to consistently provide a high standard of care to children looked after with complex needs and challenging behaviours that promotes development and includes emotional warmth, nurturing and understanding in very challenging circumstances.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	3, 4, 5, 6, 7	1, 2, 4, 5
A good understanding of, and the ability to reflect on, the impact that chronic abuse and trauma has on all areas of a child's development.	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	5, 6, 7	1, 4
An ability and willingness to take part in therapeutic work with children with appropriate supervision and consultation.	2, 3, 6	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 4

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDs	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
The ability to support children/young people who have failed to succeed in mainstream school, to work towards achieving stability in mainstream school or another educational pathway.	3, 4, 7, 8	6	1, 4, 5
Flexible in providing day care for children waiting for an identified educational placement.	8	6	1
The ability to help a child self-regulate and manage stress.	2, 3, 4, 6	5, 6, 7	1, 2
The ability to help a child communicate their thoughts and feelings effectively and safely.	1, 2, 3	4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3
Providing a safe and caring environment			
The ability to assess the risks a child might pose to self, others, and/or their environment, and the risk others might pose to the child, and to act to reduce this. To contribute towards the risk management plan and work to reduce risk.	3, 4, 5	4, 5, 6	1, 2, 5
A level of understanding and experience of managing risk.	3, 4, 5	3, 4, 5, 6	1, 5
An ability to distinguish between behaviours which may be a result of past trauma, and those that are expected as part of normal childhood development.	2, 3	3, 5, 6	1, 4, 5
Knowledge and understanding of anti-social behaviours such as self-harm, drug use, mental health issues, criminal activity, and the possible impact of those behaviours on the child and others.	2, 3, 6	3, 5, 6, 7	1, 4, 5
Working as part of a team			
The ability to work closely with the range of professionals that are involved with a child and to actively participate in placement decisions.	20, 21	2, 6	1, 3
The ability to provide robust reasons for refusal of any placements that fall within the placement range expected of Skill Level 3 foster carers.	1-12 and 15	1, 2, 4, 7	N/a

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDs	Associated TSDs F& F Carers
To ensure that information that relates to children and their families is kept confidential and to understand when it is and is not appropriate to share this.	3, 26	1	1, 3
To promote equality and diversity and to challenge discrimination by communicating in a non-judgmental manner.	2, 4	4	1, 3
Own development			
To complete detailed, reflective and timely recordings and to promptly report any significant concerns about a child, or their own ability to care for a child, to their supervising social worker.	1, 26	2, 4	1, 3, 6
The ability to engage in and develop professionally through reflective supervision.	20	7	6
An openness to discussing what impact fostering is likely to have/has had on themselves/their families and their relationships.	20	7	6
A commitment to ongoing training and to applying the learning from training in practice, with ongoing practice clearly evidencing learning from previous relevant training undertaken. An ability and willingness to further own knowledge by self-guided learning e.g. reading, media search.	20	7	6

It is expected that Skill Level 3 foster carers will continually evidence the above requirements and competencies. These will be discussed at regular intervals and confirmed as part of the Annual Household Review. On-going personal development is an **essential** requirement.

Skills Level 4 - Reading Therapeutic Foster Care (RTFC)

(Carers for children aged 8-12 years or siblings where the elder child is aged between 8 -12 and there is a challenging sibling dynamic due to previous experiences of trauma)

Reading Therapeutic Foster Carers (RTFCs) will usually be able to provide full time care with one carer being at home full time. RTFC carers will provide placements for single children aged between 8 and 12 years who are deemed to be highly vulnerable and/or who present challenging behaviours due to previous experiences of trauma, and for sibling pairs where the elder child is aged between 8 -12 and there is a challenging sibling dynamic due to previous experiences of trauma.

It is expected that RTFCs will **only** take service breaks/holidays between placements unless they include the fostered child(ren). Ideally RTFC placements will be solo (unless placed as part of a sibling pair), however foster carers with other children in the household will be considered if the children are settled, secure and assessed as likely to cope with the placement of a child with complex needs.

- RTFC carers are expected to:
- Have completed all required trainings for Skill Level 1, 2 and 3 foster carers.
- Attend a 2-day RTFC training. [\[Training content to be confirmed\]](#)
- Attend weekly group supervision and monthly training delivered by the Therapeutic Social Worker (Fostering).
- Have completed some training in Attachment Theory, and Developmental Trauma.
- Have completed the Fostering Toolkit Programme, or to plan to do so within the first 12 months if newly approved RBC foster carers.
- Undertake a minimum of 30 hours of additional training courses (annually) to support their fostering of children with complex needs alongside mandatory training and as agreed in their supervision plan.
- To engage fully with support from the RTFC professional team including a minimum of 2x weekly calls from their supervising social worker and weekly calls from the Therapeutic Social Worker (Fostering).

A retainer consisting of the skills element of the fee will be paid for a maximum of **8 weeks** in any one financial year, and foster carers receiving this fee will be expected to proactively make themselves available to help with mainstream relief care and day-care (unless they are taking an agreed service break / holiday).

Foster carers will **only** receive a child maintenance allowance when a child is placed with them.

Where the Therapeutic Foster Care Programme is provided to child in a mainstream foster placement ('Wrap around') the foster carer **may** be eligible to receive the RTFC skills payment at the discretion of the Fostering Team Manager and provided they engage fully with the programme. The fee will **only** be paid for the period that the child is on the programme.

[**Note:** Consideration is being given to whether this scheme should have a specific therapeutic respite foster carer attached to it, specifically linked to the 6 - 8 therapeutic carers recruited within the scheme, and if so the associated payment model].

RTFC carers are expected to **not** take holidays without the child whilst a child is in placement. If a carer elects **not** to take a service break at any time during the financial year due to a child(ren) being placed, the carer will receive payment of an enhanced service break fee at **150% of the RTFC fee**.

If a RTFC takes a child on holiday they will be entitled to the same additional travel costs that other RBC mainstream foster carers are entitled to, i.e., up to £250 (per child) for a holiday in the UK or Europe or £500 (per child) for holidays involving long-distance flights, and to receive an enhanced child allowance (an additional 50%) whilst the child is away on holiday with them.

Competencies required - Skill Level 4 - Therapeutic Foster Carers

Reading Therapeutic Foster Carers **must** meet the competencies as set out for Skill Levels 1, 2 and 3, plus the following:

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDS
Caring for children		
Foster carers have significant and relevant previous experience of caring for children and young people with challenging behaviours resulting from previous trauma. They are able to view the child positively and promote signature strengths.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 15	1-7
Carers are confident in working with traumatised children with a range of complex needs and are able to establish and maintain positive working relationships with children with complex needs which involve nurture, structure, and boundary setting.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10	1-7
Carers are able to work in a strengths-based way using social learning theory and a strengths perspective. This includes using behavioural strategies such as reward and incentive systems, offering structured and predictable routines, modelling and providing regular positive reinforcement, and ensuring opportunities to build connections using PACE.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10	1-7
Carers have experience and understanding of the rationale of early intervention techniques to prevent situations escalating.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10	2, 3, 4, 5, 6
Carers are confident to adapt their parenting approach to support the individual child's emotional and developmental needs and are committed to the child's individualised daily programme set out and agreed with the Therapeutic Social Worker (Fostering).	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10	1, 2, 5

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).			Associated NMS	Associated TSDS
Foster carers have skills in observation and monitoring of children's behaviour and presentation in line with guidance from the Therapeutic Social Worker (Fostering). They will monitor the child's behaviour and progress and convey information verbally via regular Teams calls with a member of the team.			1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 26	3, 4, 5, 6
Carers will be available to support children who have been excluded from school or where there is no school provision.			8	5, 6
Providing a safe and caring environment				
Foster carers recognise the need for, and can provide, a high level of active supervision to maintain children's safety and well-being in their home and in the community.			1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10	1-6
Carers can appropriately manage challenging behaviours from children in line with therapeutic approaches as advised by the Therapeutic Social Worker (Fostering), to understand the context of the behaviour and respond effectively to build connections with the child at times of difficulty.			1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	3, 4, 5, 6
Carers can reflect in the moment to actively utilise de-escalation techniques to minimise the risk to the child and others in potentially volatile situations.			1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7	4, 5, 6
Working as part of a team				
Foster carers are an integral part of the Therapeutic Foster Care team and will engage in regular meetings with the Therapeutic Social Worker (Fostering), and other members of the team. They are confident to share their experiences and insights with others, to contribute to discussions about the child's strengths and needs.			4, 20	2, 7
Carers commit to taking part in a minimum of 3x weekly Teams discussions / update reporting which is a requirement of the scheme. The PDR informs the basis for intervention to support the child's development and increase connections.			4, 20	2, 7
Carers are skilled in report writing. Their recording is accurate and reflective and demonstrates compassionate understanding of where behaviours come from and what needs they are reflecting.			1, 4, 26	2, 4, 5
Carers provide a weekly written recording of the child's presentation and behaviour, reflecting the effectiveness of strategies and any			1, 4, 26	2, 4

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDS
other observations required for presentation at the weekly foster carer support and learning group.		
Attendance and participation at the weekly foster carer support and learning group is essential.	20	7
Carers are confident to complete psychometric questionnaires as required as part of the assessment of the child's behavioural and adaptive skills.	4, 26	2, 4, 5
Own development		
Foster carers are able to engage in reflective practice through supervision. This includes the ability to acknowledge personal triggers and recognise the impact of secondary trauma.	21	7
Carers are proactive in attending training and making use of resources to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the impact of trauma and negative early childhood experiences.	20	7
Carers can reflect on interventions and strategies and to adapt ways of working based on the needs of the child.	3, 4	5, 6, 7
Carers are open to constructive feedback and to alternative ways of working.	4, 21	2, 4, 6
Carers have the confidence and ability to actively work alongside other team members to ensure a consistent approach across all contexts is maintained.	4, 21	2, 4, 6

Reading Enhanced Therapeutic Foster Care for adolescents (RETFC) - Skill Level 4+

Reading Children's Services will be designing an Enhanced Therapeutic Foster Care Scheme during 2025/2026 for Skills Level 4 specialist therapeutic foster carers, who are able to provide specialist placements to adolescents aged 13 and over. It is likely that placements will be expected to continue until the young person is able to move into the leaving care pathway. Carers will be expected to be experienced in caring for adolescents and to be willing to go the extra mile to ensure they are appropriately prepared to achieve independent living when they are of an age and at a stage to feel ready to do so. Ideally RTFC Enhanced placements will be solo, however foster carers with other children in the household will be considered if the children are settled, secure and assessed as likely to cope with a child with complex needs.

Further information on this scheme will be available in due course.

Parent and Child Programme - Skill Level 4

Reading Children's Services will be designing a Parent & Child Foster Care Scheme during 2025/2026. Parent & Child foster carers will provide care and support to young parents who need help and guidance to be able to care and support their child(ren) safely. These are expected to usually be short term arrangements (approximately 12 – 16 weeks). One carer will need to be at home full-time.

Training requirements

Reading Parent & Child Foster Carers will be expected to meet the competencies as set out for Skill Levels 1, 2 and 3, plus the following:

Training	
A specific training package is to be developed for RBC Parent and Child foster carers	[Training content to be confirmed. To include – Supporting attachment and giving evidence in court].
Other training	It is anticipated that Parent & Child foster carers will be able to access bespoke training specific to their specialist role – details to follow.

Competencies – Skill Level 4 - Parent and Child

Reading Parent & Child Foster Carers will be expected to meet the competencies as set out for Skill Levels 1, 2 and 3, plus the following:

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDS
Caring for children		
Knowledgeable and up to date about normal child development.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8	3, 5, 6
Good knowledge of attachment issues and the importance of promoting primary attachments.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	3, 4, 5
Providing a safe and caring environment		
Good awareness and understanding of child protection and risk factors.	4, 5	6
Able to provide a good level of supervision to the parent, where concerns are responded to quickly and effectively.	4, 9	2, 3, 6
The ability to work with birth parents and to maintain a good relationship, whilst keeping a clear child focus.	2, 9	2, 6
Available to provide the required level of supervision for the duration of the placement.	1-12	1-6
Able to work to an agreed plan and to be adaptable to changes.	1-12	1-6
Able to recognise the importance of the parent and child's, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender, sexuality and disability and to work in a non-discriminatory manner.	1, 2, 9	1, 2, 4, 6
Able to work within a legal framework.	3, 4, 20, 21	6
Working as part of a team		
Good communication skills.	1, 2, 3, 4, 20, 21	4
Able to work closely with health visitors and other health professionals.	4	2, 3, 4, 6
Available to attend meetings as required and able to provide clear written and verbal feedback distinguishing fact from opinion.	1, 4, 26	2, 4, 6
Able to work as part of a team, alongside other professionals.	1, 4, 20, 21	2, 6

Competencies (Foster carers will need to be able to provide a range of evidence to demonstrate that they have been able to meet each requirement).	Associated NMS	Associated TSDS
Professionalism and personal development		
Able to complete detailed, reflective and timely recordings as well as to report any significant concerns about a child/young person or their own ability to care for a child to their supervising social worker.	1, 4, 26	2, 4
Committed to engaging in reflective supervision and to using it to support own professional development.	20, 21	7
An openness to discussing the impact that fostering is likely to have/has had on themselves/their families and their relationships.	20, 21	7
A commitment to ongoing training and putting learning into practice and able to evidence previous relevant training undertaken. An ability and willingness to further own knowledge by self-guided learning e.g. reading, media search.	20	7

Mockingbird Hub Home Carer - Skill Level 4

Mockingbird Hub Home Carers are experienced foster carers who each provide support to a defined group of other local foster carers, including both short-term and long-term mainstream carers, and kinship foster carers. They organise regular events and can provide relief care to support other carers' placements. These hubs help to create the sense of an extended family and community.

Hub home carers are paid through a combination of a foster carer fees and allowances:

- A hub home carer's fee of £600 per week (this includes providing 10 sleep-over nights a month and mileage of up to 200 miles a month).
- An additional fee for each additional sleep-over night provided (at the rate of **£65** per night)
- Payment for excess mileage at the rate of 45 pence per mile (after the first 200 miles per month).
- An allowance of **up to** £150 per month to cover costs of arranging / hosting social events.

Hilary Loades

10th March 2025

Appendix 1 – Progression from Skill Level 1 to Skill Level 2 - Foster Carer(s)' Evidence



RBC FC Skill Level 1
to 2 Progression Tem