



INTRODUCTION

The fostering National Minimum Standards are a set of 31 standards that outline the expectations of fostering services in England. The document was produced by the UK Government in 2011.

The National Minimum Standards can be broken down into two areas:

- 1. The child focused standards 1-12 (what children in foster care need from their foster carers)
- 2. The standards of the fostering service 13-31 (what fostering services need to achieve in terms of their own practice, in order to provide the best care to the children they are responsible for and to support their foster carers to do so too).

The National Minimum Standards provide important guidelines for fostering services within local authorities and independent fostering agencies and their foster carers. The main objectives of the National Minimum Standards are to safeguard children and young people in foster care and promote their well-being. The National Minimum Standards are used by Ofsted to assess and monitor fostering services when they are being inspected.



This pocket book guide will highlight the child focused standards and give practical examples of how these can be met. It will also show how the standards of the fostering service link to each one of the 12 child focused standards.



STANDARD 1: THE CHILD'S WISHES AND FEELINGS AND VIEWS OF THOSE SIGNIFICANT TO THEM

Meaning – as a foster carer there is an expectation that you are available to listen to the child/ren in your care so that they know that you care about how they feel and what they have to say. It is also important that you have openness to listen with empathy to the views of the child's family members and/or those others who are important in their lives such as friends, independent advocates and previous foster carers who they may still be in touch with.

Examples of how this standard can be achieved:

- Set time aside with the child to find out about the important things that are happening in their life, such as family time, relationships with you and other children in the foster family, their school life and friendships.
- 2. Encourage the child to have the confidence to express their own views and wishes to the professionals involved in their life, with your supportive presence nearby.
- 3. If the child is not able to express their own views or struggles to get heard by professionals, as their foster carer you will need to be their voice and speak up on their behalf. This might involve in requesting certain services or additional support to help them with their difficulties.

Standards of the fostering service that are relevant to this child focused standard:

STANDARD 2: PROMOTING A POSITIVE IDENTITY, POTENTIAL AND VALUING DIVERSITY THROUGH INDIVIDUALISED CARE

Meaning – foster carers need to ensure that the care they provide to children supports them to develop a positive view of who they are and where they have come from. This includes their links to their family and an understanding of their ethnic, cultural, religious background and sexual and gender identity. There is an expectation that foster carers recognise that no child is the same and that they provide care that is supportive of every child's unique needs.

Examples of how this standard can be achieved:

- 1. Foster carers actively find out as much as they can about the child's history and their journey into and through foster care. This would include the issues they experienced in the care of their family or former carers so that they can be sensitive to the child's emotional needs and help them to become more resilient.
- Poster carers seek to learn about and understand the ethnic, cultural and religious background of the child and their family. This will enable the foster carer to support the child to keep their identity alive and feel positive about themselves.
- Foster carers support the child to be able to practice their cultural traditions and religious practices. This may mean that they provide food and dishes that relate to the child's ethnic background, support them to follow traditions such as dancing and listening to music that relates to their culture and/or attending a place of worship such as church or mosque.



Standards of the fostering service that are relevant to this child focused standard:

Standard 13: recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children.

Standard 15: matching a child with a placement that meets their assessed needs.



Standard 15: matching a child with a placement that meets their assessed needs.

Standard 20: learning and development of foster carers. **Standard 21:** supervision and support of foster carers.

STANDARD 3: PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND RELATIONSHIPS

Meaning – foster carers should support children to enjoy positive relationships with the foster family and with people in their life such as their family of origin and others around them such as teachers and friends. It is important that foster carers support the child to interact positively with these people and within the community and help them to behave in an appropriate way.

- 1. Foster carers to ensure that they model positive relationships and behaviour in their own family. This can be shown to the child via the way that they communicate, how they manage challenges and how they resolve differences.
- Poster carers ensure that they keep up to date with training that focusses on understanding childhood trauma and behaviours and provides positive approaches to support a child to manage this. For example; Secure Base, PACE, trauma informed parenting and de-escalation.
- 3. Foster carers encourage children to communicate with them when they are feeling angry or upset and support them to develop skills to calm themselves and engage in resolving conflict.

STANDARD 4: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN (PROTECTING FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT)

Meaning – foster carers have a responsibility to not only keep children safe but to also create an environment where they are able to feel safe and supported to keep themselves safe from harm which includes, abuse and also accidents.

Examples of how this standard can be achieved:

- 1. Foster carers create an environment where children feel able to trust them and communicate with them openly. This can be achieved by setting time aside to listen to the child and to also provide lots of reassurance physically and verbally that you care about them and are a safe and trusted adult.
- 2. Foster carers balance the above, with supporting children to take appropriate risks in line with their age or stage of development. This could be walking to school with their friends, going to the local shop to buy sweets or playing football in the local park. Foster carers will need to work with the child, their social worker and the foster carers supervising social worker to agree on what is and is not appropriate and how this will be monitored, this is known as a risk assessment.
- 3. Foster carers keep up to date with training courses that reflect safeguarding and safer care. They also have access to the government document Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) to gain an understanding of the collective responsibility for everyone to keep children safe.



Standards of the fostering service that are relevant to this child focused standard:

Standard 15: matching a child with a placement that meets their assessed needs.

Standard 19: suitability to work with children.

Standard 20: learning and development of foster carers.

Standard 21: supervision and support of foster carers.

Standard 22: handling allegations and suspicions of harm.

Standard 25: managing effectively and efficiently monitoring

the service

Standard 29: notification of significant events.



Standard 20: learning and development of foster carers.

Standard 21: supervision and support of foster carers.

Standard 25: managing effectively and efficiently monitoring

the service

Standard 26: records

Standard 29: notification of significant events.

STANDARD 5: CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE

Meaning – it is hoped that the support provided by the foster carer and the safety of their home environment will reduce the risk of children going missing. However, if a child does go missing the ground work that the foster carer has put in with them to identify risks and keep themselves safe will hopefully enable the child to return as quickly as possible.

- Foster carers educate children about the risks that they might face from others and within the community at an age/ability appropriate level.
- 2. Foster carers create open and honest communication with the children and young people they care for about their duties and responsibilities to keep the child safe and follow reporting processes if the child does leave the foster home without permission.
- 3. Children and young people are supported to understand the importance of foster carers checking in on them when they are away from their care and why this is designed to keep them safe.

STANDARD 6: PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Meaning – foster carers ensure that the children they care for live in an environment where their health needs are recognised and promoted. This takes the form of their physical and their emotional health and there is an expectation that the foster carer will support the child to have access to the services they need such as therapists, GPs, opticians, dieticians etc.

Examples of how this standard can be achieved:

- Children are encouraged by the foster carer to eat a balanced diet incorporating a range of fruit and vegetables and are also supported to learn about making healthy food choices for themselves. Involvement in helping to shop for food and prepare and cook meals can assist with this
- Children are supported to achieve and healthy lifestyle and engage in organised or family activities such as sports clubs, swimming, cycling, nature walks etc.
- Foster carers ensure that they keep up to date with first aid training and any other courses related to promoting good health and hygiene within the home and the recording of any medication given to children in their care.



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Standard 20: learning and development of foster carers. **Standard 21:** supervision and support of foster carers.

Standard 26: records

Standard 29: notification of significant events.



Standard 13: recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children.

Standard 15: matching a child with a placement that meets their assessed needs.

Standard 21: supervision and support of foster carers.

STANDARD 7: LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Meaning – foster carers ensure that children have the opportunity to enjoy interests that will develop their confidence and self-esteem and this will hopefully help them to engage in their community. In this sense there is an expectation that foster carers provide opportunities for children to engage in leisure activities.

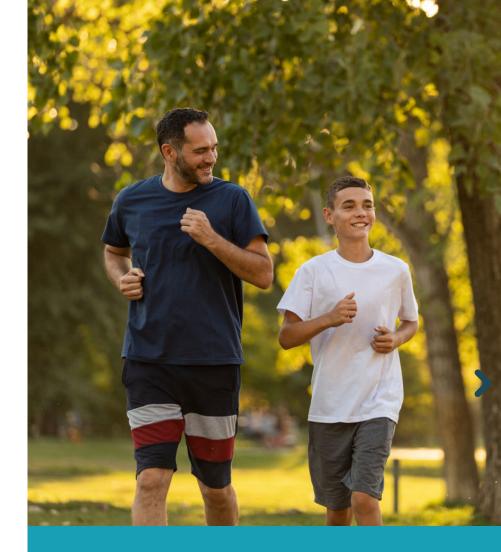
- 1. Foster carers talk individually with children about the things that they find interesting or have found interesting in the past and support them to become involved in that activity; this could be an interest in arts and crafts to something more physical such as football or tennis.
- Where children have no or little hobbies, foster carers begin to introduce ideas to the child without any pressure, to see what sparks their interest. For example; going to a park to watch a local football match as a family or visiting the local library.
- 3. Foster carers should encourage children to make and sustain friendships by inviting them for play dates or encouraging the child to bring a friend along to a family activity.

STANDARD 8: PROMOTING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Meaning – there is an expectation that foster carers support the children they care for to understand the value of education and to achieve their potential at nursery, school and college.

Examples of how this standard can be achieved:

- Foster carers support a childs learning by being available to listen to them read and to set time aside to assist with homework and projects.
- The foster home becomes an environment where children can learn outside of school. For example; foster carers cook and bake with children, take children on nature walks, to museums, or grow plants and vegetables with them.
- Foster carers ensure that they build positive relationships with staff in the foster child's nursery, school or the young persons' college. This will help the foster carer to advocate for what additional support they have observed the child or young person to need, to help them to achieve their potential.



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STANDARD 9: PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING CONTACT

Meaning – foster carers should understand why it is necessary, wherever safe to do so, for children to have contact with family members, friends and other people that are important in their lives and to support them to achieve this.

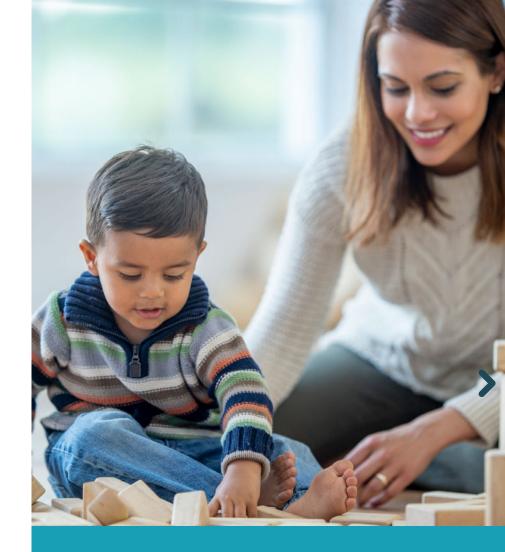
- Wherever safe and appropriate to do so, the foster carer should invest in developing a professional connection with the child's family and significant others, in order to model and promote a positive working relationship.
- 2. Foster carers take time to listen to children about their experiences of family time, both positive and negative, and ensure that they support them to voice this to their social worker, or advocate on their behalf if this is not possible.
- 3. Wherever practical and risk assessed, foster carers support children by transporting them to and from family time so that the child feels comfortable and safe.

STANDARD 10: PROVIDING A SUITABLE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR THE FOSTER CHILD

Meaning – there needs to be enough room in the foster carers home for the foster child/ren to be able to have their own bedroom (unless deemed safe for siblings to share). The home also needs to be of a standard where everyone who lives there has space and privacy when needed and is able to feel safe, secure and warm.

Examples of how this standard can be achieved:

- The foster home has adequate and safe furniture and is maintained at a good standard of hygiene and cleanliness.
- 2. Foster carers are trained in and adhere to health and safety guidelines (annual health and safety review) to ensure that they maintain a physically safe environment for children to live in.
- Foster carers ensure that they let their fostering service know in advance if there are any changes that might affect the available space in the foster home. For example; building work or an adult child planning to return home to live etc.



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STANDARD 11: PREPARATION FOR A PLACEMENT

Meaning – children are welcomed into the foster home in a planned way, wherever possible and in a way that makes them feel reassured, wanted and valued and does not overwhelm them.

- Foster carers ensure that they involve themselves as fully as possible in discussions related to the matching process, so that they can make the best assessment of whether they can adapt to the needs of the child and be as prepared as possible to welcome them.
- 2. Foster carers can think about "ice breakers" to help welcome the child. For example; arranging a treat meal for the first night, introducing the family pet/s early on, if safe and appropriate to do so or letting other children in the house show the new child around.
- Welcome baskets could be put in the child's room that are appropriate to their age, needs, abilities, cultural and/or gender identity. For example; pens/pencils, toiletries, books, cuddly toy.

STANDARD 12: PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE AND MOVES TO ADULTHOOD AND LEAVING CARE

Meaning – there is an expectation that as young people grow and develop, their foster carers support them to achieve independence skills so that they know how to look after themselves when they move on to their own accommodation and can manage financially.

Examples of how this standard can be achieved:

- 1. Foster carers support young people to learn to manage their finances. For example; teaching them to budget by showing them what essentials are likely to cost such as utility bills, travel, food etc and sitting alongside them to work out what they will need to put aside every month to ensure bills and food are paid for and what is left for social activities.
- Foster carers can take young people food shopping to show them how to take advantage of discounts and special offers and what food items are essentials.
- Foster carers can show young people how to undertake household tasks such as cleaning, changing a fuse, doing laundry, cooking simple dishes etc. It is important to show a young person and also gently support alongside them to do this until they can manage the task alone.



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If you are a FosterTalk member and have any queries, please telephone 0121 758 5013.

THANK YOU FOR READING OUR GUIDE.

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