# SSW Induction of Foster Carers Procedure

Social Work Procedures · https://handbook.co.uk/docs/ssw-induction-of-foster-carers-procedure/

*(Last reviewed 21/05/2025)*

### Legislative and Regulatory Framework

The National Minimum Standards (NMS) for fostering state:

1. All new Foster Carers will receive an induction.
2. On approval, Foster Carers are provided with information, either in a handbook or through electronic resources, which includes policies, procedures (including with regard to allegations), guidance, financial information, legal information and insurance details. This information must be kept up to date and reviewed regularly.

This procedure must be read in conjunction with the **Foster Carers Induction Policy** and other relevant policies referenced later in this document.

### Purpose and Principles

The induction process ensures that newly approved Foster Carers receive consistent, structured, and supportive guidance to help them begin their fostering journey with confidence, understanding, and emotional safety.

In line with trauma-informed principles, the induction process should:

- Promote a sense of **safety** for new carers as they enter their fostering role.
- Build **trust and transparency** between the Supervising Social Worker (SSW) and Foster Carer.
- Encourage **collaboration and shared learning** between the carer and the professional team.
- Emphasise **empowerment**, ensuring Foster Carers feel capable, valued, and supported.

- Acknowledge that fostering can be both rewarding and emotionally challenging, and that support should be **responsive, compassionate, and reflective**.

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### Preparation and Familiarisation

If the Supervising Social Worker has not completed the assessment, they must read the full assessment and the panel minutes thoroughly prior to the first visit.
This helps the SSW to develop an informed and empathetic understanding of the Foster Carer's background, family context, strengths, and areas for development, setting the foundation for a trusting and supportive relationship.

Please note that this induction process complements the **Foundations for Fostering Workshop**, which explores key topics in greater depth. This workshop provides an opportunity for new Foster Carers to connect with others, share experiences, and ask questions in a safe, supportive space.

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### Overview of Induction Process

The initial induction is a sharing of practical and emotional information to assist Foster Carers as they begin their fostering journey. The **Agency Induction Checklist** must be used.
There are three parts to this checklist, completed by different departments but which may be done concurrently:

1. **Part One – Placement Officer:**
   To be completed within 48 hours to 14 days from ADM decision.
   This stage provides the Placement Officer an opportunity to get to know the carers, understand their expectations, and discuss matching and placement processes in a sensitive, open way.
2. **Part Two – Education Consultant and Children's Advocate:**
   To be completed within 48 hours to 14 days from ADM decision.
   This supports carers to understand education pathways, advocacy, and the child's voice in fostering, reinforcing a trauma-informed approach that centres the needs and perspectives of children.
3. **Part Three – Supervising Social Worker (SSW):**
   To be completed within 48 hours to 3 weeks from ADM decision.

The SSW coordinates the process, ensuring the carer feels emotionally supported, informed, and practically prepared.

Once the induction is completed, the SSW must email the completed checklist to the Team Manager, who will sign it off and inform RAPT and Support Services.

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**Key Topics for Induction Discussion**

**Foster Carer Agreement:**
The SSW must go through the agreement collaboratively to ensure the carer understands expectations, boundaries, and mutual responsibilities. Emphasise that this is a partnership grounded in shared commitment to the child's welfare.

**Foster Carers Handbook:**
Encourage the carer to read the handbook at their own pace. The SSW should explore key sections during visits, using it as a reflective tool rather than a compliance checklist.

**Personal Development Plan (PDP):**
Discuss the PDP based on the Form F Assessment and initial reflections. Explore the carer's hopes, strengths, and any fears or concerns about their first placement. Use this discussion to affirm their readiness, validate anxieties, and build confidence.

**Training Programme:**
Ensure that all mandatory training has been completed. Explain the value of continuous learning as part of a professional and therapeutic approach to fostering. Reinforce that training enhances understanding of trauma, attachment, and self-care.

**Training, Support and Development Standards (TSDS):**
Discuss the importance of TSDS as an empowering framework for professional growth. Ensure carers are signed up and understand how this contributes to their learning journey.

**Expectations Around Visits and Recordings:**
Discuss clearly the structure of visits:

- Supervision visits occur every four weeks, with a set agenda.

- Supervisory home visits are less formal and include seeing and speaking with children every eight weeks.

Emphasise that visits are not only for oversight but also for **support and reflective conversation**. Recognise that new carers may need **increased contact, reassurance, and guidance** during their first placements.

**Out of Hours Service:**
Explain the support available outside working hours, ensuring carers understand they are **never alone** in managing difficulties.

**Safer Caring Policy:**
Ensure the family's Safer Caring Policy is individualised, inclusive, and co-created. It should balance safety with warmth, ensuring it does not create fear but rather shared understanding of how to keep everyone safe.

**Health & Safety:**
Ensure outstanding actions are completed and discussed in a calm, collaborative manner.

**Foster Carer Feedback:**
Encourage carers to share feedback openly. Reinforce that their views are valued and help shape agency practice.

**Fostering Allowances:**
RAPT to discuss all aspects of allowances, holidays, school trips, and transportation in a transparent and supportive way.

**Support Group:**
Explain the role of support groups as a space for **peer connection, mutual support, and learning**. Encourage participation as part of the carer's emotional wellbeing and professional development.

**Foster Carer Buddy:**
Assign a 'buddy' – an experienced Foster Carer – for the first six months. Encourage open, non-judgmental peer dialogue.

**National Minimum Standards and Foster Carer Charter:**
Provide copies or email versions and discuss key principles, ensuring carers understand their rights,

roles, and the agency’s responsibilities to them.

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### The Foundations for Fostering Workshop

Attendance is mandatory for all primary Foster Carers and is strongly encouraged for secondary carers.
This two-part workshop, facilitated by the **PA Group Therapeutic Lead**, offers practical insight into fostering and prepares carers emotionally and psychologically for the role.

**Benefits Include:**

- Trauma-informed education and reflective learning.
- Understanding the impact of early life experiences on children’s behaviour and relationships.
- Building peer connections and resilience.
- Access to ongoing resources and professional support.

If carers cannot attend due to unforeseen circumstances, the SSW must liaise promptly with the Therapeutic Lead to arrange alternatives. Persistent non-attendance should prompt a restorative discussion with the carer, SSW, and Team Manager to identify barriers and support engagement.

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### Policies to be Shared and Discussed

All the following must be shared, explained, and discussed, not just distributed. The SSW should check understanding and answer questions sensitively:
*(Full list retained as per original.)*

- Foster Carer Handbook
- Allegations and Complaints Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy and Guidance
- Children’s Guide & Young Person’s Guide
- Data Protection and Information Management Policy
- Education and Employment Policy
- Fees and Allowances

- Foster Care Agreement Template
- Foster Carer Charter
- Foster Carer Training and Development Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Induction of Foster Carers Policy and Guidance
- Initial Placement Agreement Template
- Missing from Care Policy
- Recording Policy
- Respite Foster Carer Policy
- Restraint Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Statement of Purpose
- Supervision and Support of Foster Carers Policy
- Whistle-blowing Policy

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**Mandatory Training Reminder**

**Pre-panel (refreshed every 3 years):**

- Paediatric First Aid
- Safeguarding and Allegations
- Positive Parenting & De-escalation

*(Safer Caring remains mandatory within assessment and Skills to Foster.)*

**Post-panel:**

- Induction
- Health, Safety & Hygiene (refreshed every 3 years)

**Within the First 3 Months:**

- Unannounced visit with children present to gauge adjustment and offer supportive feedback.

**After 6 Months:**

- Household Review to assess wellbeing, adaptation, and additional support needs.

**Within 12 Months:**

- Completion of TSDS.

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**Final Notes**

Induction is not a single event but a **process of relationship-building, guidance, and shared reflection**.

A newly approved Foster Carer and their family experience significant lifestyle and emotional change. The SSW's role is to provide **consistent, compassionate, and responsive support** — recognising that early fostering experiences shape long-term retention, confidence, and resilience.

During the induction period, SSWs should prioritise **empathic listening, reassurance, and emotional containment**, ensuring carers and all family members feel understood, valued, and supported.