

Professional Development in Fostering: An introduction to the Personal Reflective Journal for foster carers

About The Fostering Network

[The Fostering Network](#) is the UK's leading fostering charity. We are the essential network for fostering, bringing together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice. We work to ensure all fostered children and young people experience stable family life and we are passionate about the difference foster care makes. We champion fostering and seek to create vital change, so that foster care is the very best it can be.

As part of the [Fostering Communities](#) programme, we have developed a Personal Reflective Journal for foster carers. Our aim is to help foster carers feel empowered and motivated, enabling them to use their own strengths and abilities to benefit themselves, their community and other people, whilst improving their own competence, confidence and motivation.

The Foster Carer Personal Reflective Journal

This Personal Reflective Journal is an account of your own professional development but, more essentially, it is an opportunity to reflect on your learning experience.

There is no right or wrong way of recording in your journal, as this should take account of your personal experience, preferred learning style and individual learning goals. The journal is primarily intended as a private space for personal reflection, consolidation and goal setting.

This journal will be an important evaluation tool which will assist you with your own professional development.

Engaging in a learning experience does not necessarily mean that learning has taken place - it is only through externalising the experience that you can begin to apply it to your fostering practice and experiences. This is where your personal reflective journal can help, as it allows you to document what you are learning and help you to become more reflective in your daily practice.

What are the benefits of writing a Personal Reflective Journal?

Reflection is a useful process. It helps you to make sense of and learn from your learning experiences. It will allow you to demonstrate that you can think critically about your own skills or practice in order to improve and learn. It is important to analyse rather than just describe the things you are reflecting on, and to emphasise how you will apply what you have learned. It is also well known that writing down what you have learnt can help you to remember it or even to see things you didn't see the first time around.

Foster carers are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and development, considering how knowledge and skills can be applied to improve their ability to care for vulnerable children and young people.

The journal can, therefore, be used as an additional tool for evidencing and planning your continuing professional development, as part of your induction, supervision and annual review process with your fostering service.

National Fostering Framework's Post Approval Training Framework Record of Ongoing Learning and Development.

This journal supplements the [National Fostering Framework's Post Approval Training Framework Record of Ongoing Learning and Development](#), which forms a key part of your supervision and annual fostering review process. As such, it reflects prior learning; identifies further training and development needs; provides a tool for planning your learning and evidencing continuous professional development. The aim of the record is that it is individual and encourages foster carers to take responsibility for their own learning and development; considering at each stage how learning impacts upon their capacity to care for a child, themselves and their family. The Personal Learning Record and Development Plan has been created to sit alongside the NFF Learning and Development Framework and needs to be completed in conjunction with reading that document.

[Social Care Wales's All Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care Workers](#)

Induction is an important part of your professional development and will help you settle into your role and be effective in your work. Completing the AWIF will help you gain, develop and strengthen the knowledge, skills and understanding essential for your role and for health and social care practice in general. It provides a basis for your future learning and development and shows the progress you have made to date. The framework is designed for all social care workers. It provides a structure for common induction across Wales, outlining the knowledge and skills professionals need to gain during their induction period. Foster carers are not required to register with Social Care Wales, but new carers are expected to complete the relevant sections of the induction framework (sections 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7). The journal supplements the workbooks that should be completed for each section of the framework.

How to use the Personal Reflective Journal

The journal is part of The Fostering Network's blended learning approach, which combines online learning and face-to-face learning in groups, accompanied by self-guided research and reflection.

Each journal entry should be completed after attending a Fostering professional development events such as a:

- Face to face training course/event.
- Online webinar or e-learning.
- Group discussion activities.
- Lectures or seminars.
- Case studies or the reading of The Fostering Network resources.

After attending one of these events, you will be given your own journal entry to complete, to reflect your thoughts and individual learning experience.

This a personal learning journal, rather than a household record and should be completed by each individual foster carer, even if both attended the event.

The journal should be completed after each event that a foster carer attends, rather than multiple events. As such, it then captures what a foster carer has gained from each training course and forms part of their portfolio of evidence for the [Post Approval Learning and Development Framework for Foster Carers in Wales](#) and [All Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care](#)

What to record in the Personal Reflective Journal

This journal is structured to guide you through a series of questions, designed to:

- Clarify your learning
- Identify your further professional development goals
- Evidence your outcomes for the learning and development frameworks for foster carers in Wales as listed above

You will need to record the following information:

- Training/professional event title, type of event and date
- Hours of learning time completed
- The key learning points, and how this learning will be transferred to your childcare and your fostering practice
- What further professional development is required, and what opportunities are available for you to achieve this
- What you have learnt about yourself as a foster carer, and as part of the team around the child
- Which outcomes of the [National Fostering Framework Learning and Development Framework](#) have been achieved and evidenced

- Which outcomes of the [All Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care](#) have been achieved and evidenced
- What you will share with your supervising social worker
- What to include in your Personal Learning Record and Development Plan

Your answers to these key questions will help to clarify and articulate learning points, outcomes and goals to evidence your progress:

- What did I learn?
- What difference will it make to my fostering practice and the children in my care?
- How has this learning built upon my existing knowledge and skills to meet the needs of children placed and improve outcomes?
- What further development needs or goals have I identified?

How detailed should the journal be?

Think about how the child or young person you are caring for would react to reading the information you are recording. Be sensitive to their feelings and use non-judgmental language. Be conscious of confidentiality, for example, do not include any identifying information such as the child's surname.

Who can I share the Personal Reflective Journal with?

While the journal is intended as a private space for honest reflection, the final section asks you to consider what learning you will share with your supervising social worker. This will serve as a reminder of key areas/topics you wish to discuss with them, in supervision and at your annual review.

How The Fostering Network can help

The Fostering Network offers advice, information and support. Our expertise and knowledge are always up-to-date and available through our vital member helplines, publications, training and consultancy.

Advice

Fosterline Wales

Call us on 0800 316 7664 from 9.30am - 12.30pm Monday to Friday.

If you call outside this time, please leave a message and someone will call you back as soon as possible.

You can email us at:

fosterlinewales@fostering.net

Support and resources

Our website is an essential source of information, while our online community brings together foster carers for peer support and advice. You can login to share your experience and get advice from other foster carers. Our online community is a safe and secure area to discuss foster care matters.

thefosteringnetwork.org.uk

Training and consultancy

Wherever you are in your fostering career, as a foster carer, social worker or manager, The Fostering Network has a range of training designed to meet your development needs.

For more information contact our learning and development manager, Sarah Mobedji at sarah.mobedji@fostering.net.

Contact

To find out more about our work in Wales, please contact:

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Appendix 1 – Personal Reflective Journal



Professional Development in Fostering: Personal Reflective Journal

This journal should be completed following attendance at a Fostering Network in Wales training event and is part of our blended learning approach, which combines online learning and face-to-face learning in groups with self-guided research and reflection.

The journal supplements the Post Approval Training Framework Record of Ongoing Learning and Development, which foster carers should use to capture evidence of learning and share with their supervising social worker. It is intended to be used as a private space for personal reflection, consolidation and goal setting, to support the application of learning.

Name of participant

Course or event attended

Type of event (face-to-face training, online interactive training, webinar etc)

Date of course/event

Hours of learning completed

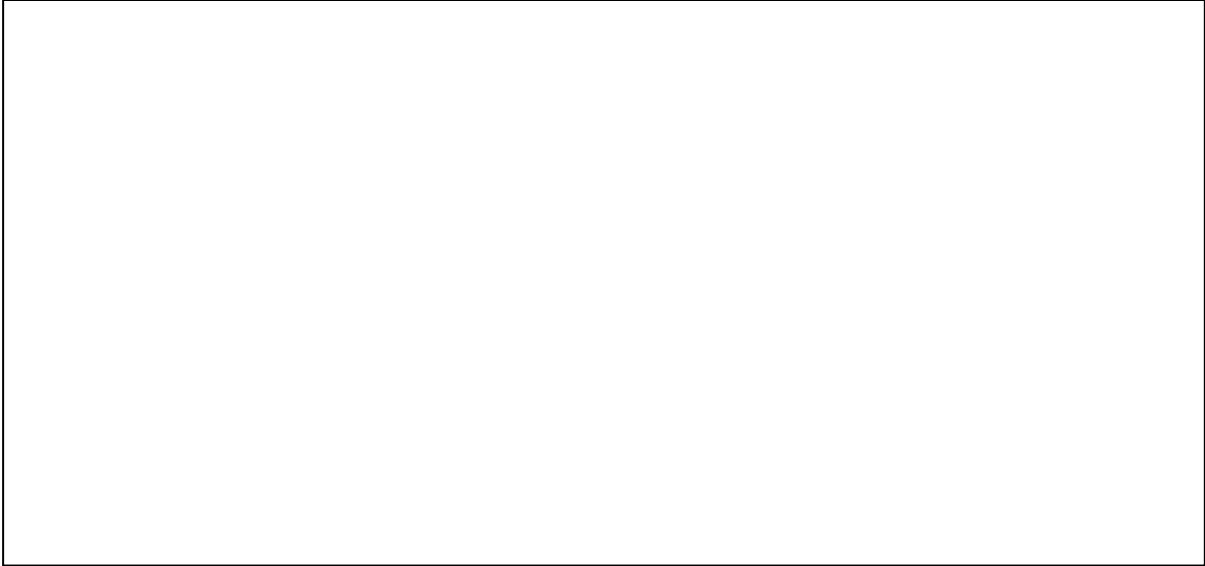
What were the key learning points for me?

How will I apply this learning to my fostering practice and direct work with children?

e.g. What I will do differently, start doing or stop doing.
Individuals or groups to make contact with

What additional professional development activities do I need to undertake to build this learning?

e.g. Practice based learning, professional/peer support, formal learning/education, self-directed learning



What have I learnt about myself as a foster carer/fostering practitioner?



Which of the outcomes of the [All Wales Induction Framework for Health and Social Care](#) has this learning helped me to achieve?

Which of the outcomes of the [Post Approval Training Framework for Foster Carers in Wales](#) has this learning helped me to achieve?

What information will I share with my Supervising Social Worker and include in my Personal Learning Record and Development Plan?

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