

Q: What is *The Skills to Foster*?

A: About *The Skills to Foster*:

The Skills to Foster, first published in 2003, is now seen as the pre-approval training product for prospective foster carers, and is used by virtually all fostering services across the UK. It is an essential resource for anyone involved in preparing new applicants who want to foster.

About the products:

The Skills to Foster pre-approval course consists of a variety of resources for course leaders, as follows:

- The *Leaders' Guide*: contains instructions and information for course leaders to plan and deliver the training sessions. Includes the CD-ROM, contains copies of all the visual aids and documents to be used in the training.
- The *Handbook*: for course participants. Each chapter corresponds with a training session and aims to consolidate participants' learning by providing them with in-depth information as well as signposts to further reading and resources.
- The *DVD*: contains films of foster carers, their families and care experienced young people talking about the topics covered in each session.
- *My Family Fosters*, handbook for sons and daughters of foster carers: provides children whose family has chosen to foster with answers to the many questions they have.
- The complete course pack: all of the products can be purchased together as the complete course pack which includes; two copies of the Leaders' Guide, 12 copies of the *DVD* and 12 copies of the *Handbook*.



The Fostering Network also produces *The Skills to Foster* assessment materials, which complement the pre-approval course and are used to assess potential foster carers on the basis of their skills, knowledge, abilities and experiences. These are available on an annual licence basis for use with mainstream carers and also family and friends carers. To find out more and arrange a licence or purchase materials visit www.fosteringresources.co.uk

Q: Who is *The Skills to Foster* produced by?

A: It is produced by the Fostering Network; we are dedicated to helping every child who is fostered achieve the very best in life and to fulfil their potential. We recognise and champion the vital role that foster families play in transforming these children's lives and help and support them to provide the best possible care. As the UK's most influential and important fostering charity, we are at the heart of foster care.

Q: Why have the Fostering Network created a new edition of *The Skills to Foster*?

The world of fostering is moving fast – and the Fostering Network's flagship resource for prospective foster carers is changing with it.

The third edition of *The Skills to Foster* has been created by the Fostering Network to reflect the needs of children in foster care and the modern foster care workforce. It has been completely rewritten and features brand new films on the DVD.

Q: How does the new edition differ to the second edition?

A: With more flexible and comprehensive content, the third edition of *The Skills to Foster* provides a training tool for fostering services which will empower trainers to respond to the needs of their service and to their particular group of participants.

- A new feature of the third edition is that it specifically addresses the additional needs facing those who are becoming family and friends foster carers, or approved kinship carers in Scotland.
- Children are at the heart of this important training course, and key topics – such as the importance of identity, positive approaches to challenging behaviour, dealing with new technologies such as social media, and the new approach to safer caring – are introduced as inter-related themes throughout creating a coherent and unified pathway through theory and practice.
- For all the sessions there are brand new films, more case studies throughout, a variety of large and small group exercises and a new emphasis on professional development through home practice activities to give participants the opportunity to consolidate their learning, reflect on the wider issues and implications of being a foster carer.
- The new Handbook offers a handy reference book, with individual sections which can be used as standalone training and exercises that can be adapted.

Q: Does *The Skills to Foster* meet fostering standards across the UK?

A: *The Skills to Foster* reflects best practice as recommended by the Fostering Network and is closely linked to occupational standards and qualifications across the UK. Foster carers in England must complete *The Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care* within 12 months, or 18 months if they are family and friends foster carers. The activities in the course and tasks in the Handbook have been fully mapped to these standards, enabling foster carers to make a significant start in evidencing their progress. For the full mapping document and more information on how *The Skills to Foster* links to occupational standards and qualifications across the UK visit www.fostering.net/all-about-fostering/providers/standards-legislation

Q: How does the third edition of *The Skills to Foster* support social pedagogy?

A: The new edition introduces four theoretical approaches: child development theory, attachment theory, social learning theory and social pedagogy. There is a great deal to cover in just six or seven sessions, and the pre-approval course is delivered by a range of trainers, many of whom will be supervising social workers and foster carers. These trainers may not have a very detailed understanding of each of the four theories; however we believe it is important to introduce these approaches as they are fundamental to the work of foster carers today.

We have ensured that as far as possible the third edition of *The Skills to Foster* is compatible with and supportive of a social pedagogic approach. In the future our hope is that training, even at pre-approval stage can be delivered by social pedagogues or trainers with a good understanding of social pedagogy within a fully social pedagogic approach framework.

Q: Who has been involved with the writing and creation of the new edition?

A: A selection of public authorities and independent fostering providers from across the UK took part in consultation focus groups to review *The Skills to Foster*. The feedback from these consultation groups, other scoping activities and pilot courses, plus the Fostering Network's experience of working closely with foster carers and services have informed *The Skills to Foster*, third edition.

The Skills to Foster- third edition 2014
Frequently asked questions

The third edition has been written collaboratively by sector experts; Caroline Bengo and Kathy Blackeby -clinical specialists, Doug Lawson - children’s services consultant, Gill Barn -practitioner and project manager in social services, and Jacky Slade –social work consultant.

Q: Will it be easy to adapt to the new edition?

A: The third edition covers the same topics as the previous editions and therefore the course and materials will have the same structure and feel. The materials will look different as they have been redesigned, but they remain easy to follow. The consultation focus groups revealed which of the activities from the second edition were popular and work well, and these have been used again in the third edition (with some modifications). For a full description of each session visit our website at www.fostering.net/tstf

Q: What are other people saying about *The Skills to Foster*, third edition?

A: Joan Frew, a resource worker with North Ayrshire Council says:

‘The new material reflects the seriousness of fostering and the weight of the foster carer’s responsibility. It gets people thinking about the complexities of the role. The high expectation of foster carers as professionals comes across in the explanations of care plans, the outline of meetings carers have to attend and their role as an advocate for the child.’

Joan Frew also appreciates *The Skills to Foster’s* online safety content aimed at carers.

‘The age group of foster carers means many are playing catch-up in this area, and the course tackles it in a very understandable way, encouraging them to ask for guidance.’

Diane Heath, a Fostering Network practice support consultant who supports fostering services and trains trainers to deliver *The Skills to Foster*, says:

‘The new edition introduces foster carers to ‘ideas that will form the bedrock of their practice.’

Miranda Morgan, Wiltshire Council social worker, says:

*‘We tried the materials with several families in the process of becoming foster carers who were worried about their children’s reactions. One couple had a 10-year-old daughter who was initially excited but had become more nervous. After participating in the *The Skills to Foster* session, her understanding increased and she felt much more confident and prepared for changes.’*

Q: Does this mean the second edition is out of date? Can we still use the old one?

A: You can continue to use the second edition however we do recommend that you use the third edition to ensure your foster carers are being provided with the most up to date training that is reflective of best practice. The second edition will no longer be available for purchase from July 2014. However if you are continuing to run the second edition course you will be able to purchase the *Record and Resource book* for a limited time period.

Q: What is the best way for me to start using to the third edition and how much does it cost?

A: As this is a new edition with new content we recommend that you purchase the Complete Course pack. At just **£790*** for a Complete Course pack, and no price change since 2009, it represents tremendous value for money.

**special members’ price; £1,590 for non-members*

A Complete Course packs consists of everything you need to run the pre-approval course, including;

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- 2 x *Leaders' Guide* (each includes a CD-ROM containing course materials)
- 12 x *Handbook*
- 1 x DVD
- 12 x *My Family Fosters* handbook

Visit www.fostering.net/tstf for full product details

Q: Are you offering any discounts?

We offer special members' prices and bulk buy discounts on all our publications including *The Skills to Foster*.

To help you get started with the third edition we are offering significant discounts on two multi packs; the Complete Course pack and the Leaders' Guide and DVD pack.

Visit www.fosteringresources.co.uk for full product details

Q: Can I see *The Skills to Foster* materials before buying them?

A: Yes, visit www.fostering.net/tstf/materials to take a look at the introduction chapters of both the *Leaders' Guide* and the *Handbook*. These include the course aims and structure. There is also a clip of the DVD available to view.

Q: How can I buy *The Skills to Foster*?

A: You can order online, via email or by phone.

www.fosteringresources.co.uk

0844 335 1892

orders@fosteringresources.co.uk

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: Members of the Fostering Network can contact the following details for information and advice on commissioning and implementing *The Skills to Foster* - third edition 2014 in their local area.

England

North East & Yorkshire and Humberside practice support consultant

Andrew Walker - 01274 814 392

London & South East practice support consultant

Diane Heath - 01273 506 484

South West practice support consultant

Joanna Adande - 020 7620 6417

East practice support team manager

Helen Keaney - 020 7620 8416 or 07436 808762

North West practice support consultant

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