

Confidence in Care

Hyder mewn Gofal

Frequently asked questions

Eligibility for Fostering Changes training:

1. What criteria will be used to allocate places to foster carers?
 - Family carers (kin-carers and non-related foster carers) who currently have a child aged 2+ placed with them and expect to be caring for that child for at least 12 weeks.
 - Carers may be local authority carers or employed by an independent or not-for-profit agency and may have any level of experience as carers (e.g. whether recently approved or caring for 20 years+).
 - Carers must be prepared to attend all 12 sessions of the programme.
2. What was the rationale for the delivery framework

We used our membership data to plan delivery, aligning it to children's needs across Wales. We looked at the distribution and density of fostering households across Wales by local authority and ensured as far as possible that the number of carers trained was proportional to total fostering households by LA.

When we were bidding we were allowed only limited contact with ADSS and that didn't extend to detailed consultation of delivery framework as that would have been unfairly preferential to us. We used our own data and intelligence from delivery partners, as to their capacity and the relationships they had with LAs, which helped inform timings and feasibility.

In terms of timing there were several factors we had to balance:

- Our agreed design principle was that once training had begun in an LA it was sustained to the end of the 5 year programme to sustain momentum and ensure sustainability. That means for instance that if an LA has fewer carers to train, training is more likely to start later in the programme. We did this as far as possible, but there were a couple of exceptions due to logistics.
- The requirements of the evaluation methodology for the RCT: a good spread was required for an initial cohort to achieve a sample size for statistical significance
- Capacity of delivery partners and logistical issues

3. Why are foster carers from IFPs included in the programme?

The Confidence in Care programme aims to improve the life chances of LACYP in Wales by: improving placement stability through better interaction and attachment

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levels; developing a more positive outlook towards education and future carer goals; increasing resilience and life skills; and using robust learning and evaluation evidence to influence future policy development in Wales. This will be achieved through the delivery of Fostering Changes training to foster, kinship and residential carers. No child in care should be disadvantaged because of the setting they are placed within therefore; the remit of CiC includes local authorities and IFP carers.

4 How will you engage hard to reach carers, kinship carers or experienced carers?

Consortium partners will work closely with LAs and IFPs to ensure hard to reach carers, kinship carers or experienced carers are informed about the training and encouraged to attend courses.

The Fostering Changes training programme

1 How does the Confidence in Care programme fit in with current models of training?

Fostering Changes is a specially designed course that has proven to help carers learn new strategies and techniques for strengthening relationships with the children they care for; improving placement stability and helping them overcome their challenges. Fostering Changes is complementary to existing training provision for carers.

2 How will you encourage foster carers to commit to the full 12 week programme?

Consortium partners and project team will work closely with local authority staff and carers to ensure that information about the training is readily available, that pre-course discussions take place and that training is accessible and within the local area.

3 Will it be possible to arrange mixed local authority groups e.g. Welsh speakers

Consortium partners are currently negotiating training course delivery with local authorities; local delivery needs to be accessible for carers during the training and for ongoing support groups.

4 Will training be available in both Welsh and English?

Yes, the training will be delivered in English and Welsh.

5 How far will carers be expected to travel to training?

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Training will be delivered within the local authority area; venues will be established during planning with the LA.

6 Can carers bring partners on courses?

Yes, and this is encouraged as it helps to promote consistent parenting. You should however consider any childcare needs that this may create as a result of two parents attending the course.

7 Will separate groups need to be arranged for foster carers, kinship carers and carers based in residential settings?

Previous experience has shown that mixed groups of foster carers and kinship carers have worked well. It may however be more beneficial to run separate groups for carers based in residential settings.

8 What if foster carers drop out?

(From SLAM) It is rare and unusual but of course does happen on occasion. Response will depend on the reason carers drop out. If for example it was due to unavoidable life events etc. then carers would be encouraged to join another course when more convenient. If they drop out due to resistance (e.g. feeling the commitment is too much or they do not like group work) then we think you have to let them go and this is something to be discussed by their supervising social worker.

9 What about training for back-up foster carers/ other family members?

(From SLAM) It is good practice if households and carers can use the same strategies and we would encourage attendance. For some households it is more convenient to attend different courses due to practical arrangements. For others they may attend the same course and this has good advantages. It will be up to facilitators to ensure that they treat those attending the same course from the same household as individuals.

10 Will travel expenses for foster carers be paid?

No

11 Will the schedule of training take school holidays in to account?

Yes, training will be only be delivered during term time.

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12 What if a foster carer misses a week of the course?

(From SLAM) If a carer misses a week of the course then we would expect a facilitator to phone the carer and update them on the material covered that week. They would of course also send out the handouts etc. If a telephone call were not possible then we would expect them to write or email.

13 Could materials and notes be made available online so that foster carers could catch-up on a missed session?

Information about Confidence in Care will be available online. There will also be a restricted content area for registered carer trainees containing course materials with resources available in Welsh and English and a discussion forum.

14 How will trainers be mindful of those who are new to or fearful of learning?

(From SLAM) The home visit prior to the start of the course is very important for engaging carers particularly those new or fearful of learning. It provides space and opportunity to explore those issues with a carer whilst also reassuring them. Meeting a facilitator prior to the start of the course means there is someone familiar when they do arrive for the first time which provides comfort. The course is very practical and collaborative; it is not about

being right or wrong. Carers are encouraged to try out ideas; strategies and problem solve together and become a group who support one another. As the course is over 12 weeks this allows time for those who are new and more fearful to build up their confidence.

15 How much time are foster carers expected to allow for homework?

(From SLAM) Rather than homework this is Home Practice and we expect all involved in Fostering Changes to use this term (particularly so those who are new or fearful of learning are not put off by terminology associated with school from which they may have poor or difficult memories). These are practical activities to be carried out with the children they are looking after in the course of their fostering lives: different activities may take different amount of times. The approach to home practice is not absolute; it is encouraged whilst recognising the many competing demands foster carers face. The course encourages carers to spend at least ten minutes a day with their child or young person.

16 Will there be opportunities for carers to attend a course in the evenings?

Consortium partners are currently negotiating training course delivery with local authorities; local delivery needs to be accessible for carers during the training and for

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ongoing support groups. If an evening course is required partners will factor in to delivery.

The independent evaluation of Fostering Changes

- 1 Some control trial participants may not be eligible for the training after 12 months – how will you manage this?

(From CASCADE) Some carers may no longer be eligible for training at the end of the 12 months study period – principally due to them no longer having a child currently placed with them. All carers will be notified of this possibility when they are approached to take part in the study. There is no evaluation-related reason for not accessing the programme at the end of the evaluation period.

- 2 How will the support groups be evaluated?

(From CASCADE) Outcomes will be assessed as part of the routine follow-up planned in the trial – that is, the trial will determine the impact of the Fostering Change programme with the support groups being considered as part of the overall package assessed.

The trial process evaluation will use face-to-face interviews with a selection of carers at the end of the study period to explore their own experience of the support groups. The interviews will allow for carers to identify and discuss what was of most relevance and interest to them, rather than restricting them to just what the research team thought may be important. We will also ask those who have been involved in facilitating the support group about their experiences.

- 3 How will the evaluators allow for randomised control test participants being spread out geographically?

(From CASCADE) Logistically, we will have field-based researchers (Wales Government funded staff) who will approach and consent carers. They will liaise with the central research team and with local authority fostering teams. Following baseline data collection via face-to-face interview, all follow-up will be undertaken remotely – either by postal or electronic questionnaire.

Statistically, responses from carers may be more similar within each local authority when compared to those of all other carers outside that area. This can affect our ability to determine effects due to the intervention. We adjust for this in our statistical analysis using a procedure called multi-level modeling.

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Information for local authorities

- 1 Is there potential for local authority staff to receive training to support the learning of their foster carers?

Discussions with ADSS Cymru and All Wales Heads of Children's' Services (AWHOCS) have been ongoing. Potential for LA staff to attend training with carers will be offered to LAs over the lifetime of the programme.

- 2 How will trainers from external organisations link with internal local authority training departments to ensure a joined up approach?

Each local authority will have a designated contact within their delivery partner organisation who will work closely with LA contacts to plan and deliver training.

- 3 We need cooperation with the health and education sectors to ensure that their messages are consistent with Fostering Changes. How can we encourage a joined up approach?

A detailed communication strategy and plan will be managed throughout the programme to ensure a range of key stakeholders are informed and engaged throughout.

- 4 Are there any financial implications for local authorities?

No

- 5 Will local authority training budgets be cut due to the free training being provided by the programme?

Training is fully supported by ADSS Cymru and AWHOCS. Training is in addition to current local authority provision.

- 6 What will be the time commitment from local authorities for support groups?

We think holding support groups once a term with a summer day is realistic and achievable.