

Competency Framework: Skills and Qualities for Kinship Foster Carers in Wales

Note on Language: Understanding the Term 'Kinship Foster Carer'

For consistency and clarity, we use 'Kinship Foster Carer' throughout this document. In Wales, you may also hear the terms 'Connected Persons Foster Carer' or 'Family and Friends Foster Carer'. While the wording varies, they all mean the same thing.

All of these terms refer to a person who is known to the child (or sibling group) - this might be a relative, family friend, or someone else who has a connection with the child (or sibling group) - and who has been formally assessed and approved as a foster carer to care specifically for that child (or sibling group) as part of a care arrangement overseen by the local authority.

The differences in terminology reflect variations in local practice, but they do not reflect any difference in status, role, or responsibilities.

Guidance

The skills and qualities for kinship foster carers in Wales are designed as a guide to help fostering services make suitability recommendations and understand where current or potential kinship foster carers may need support. They highlight what is important in the role of a kinship foster carer in Wales, but they are not a checklist for approval decisions and should not be used in isolation from other factors that contribute to decision making.

Some kinship foster carers may need ongoing support to build their confidence and ability in certain areas so they can provide the best care for the child. The fostering service and the child's social worker should work together with the kinship foster carer to identify any areas where support is needed and agree on how best to provide that support.

If the fostering service uses the **AFKA Cymru Kinship Carer Support Plan**, the skills and qualities link directly to specific sections of that plan, making it easier to see how support can be put in place.

The evidence matrix can be used to show where each of the skills and qualities has been demonstrated in the assessment or review report and/or support plan. The evidence matrix should always be used in conjunction with the full competency framework.

If there are significant concerns about a current or potential kinship foster carer's ability to develop or maintain these skills and qualities, and a support plan would not be enough to help them do so, this may be a factor in deciding not to recommend their approval or continued approval as a foster carer.

All current and potential kinship foster carers should be helped to understand how approval recommendations affect the care plan for the child they are looking after or thinking about caring for. If needed, information about the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) in Wales should be shared as early as possible, including signposting current and potential kinship foster carers to the IRM webpage: [Home | IRM Cymru](https://www.AFKAcymru.org.uk/kinship-connected-person/)

The competency framework has been informed by:

- The Corporate Parenting Charter – A Promise from Wales
- The Local Authority Fostering Services Code of Practice 2019
- The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions) (Wales) Regulations 2018
- The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (Wales) Regulations 2015
- Safeguarding Children living with Foster Carers, Adopters and Special Guardians: Learning from case reviews 2007–2019, Hedy Cleaver and Wendy Rose, Coram BAAF, 2020
- Foster Wales Good Practice Guide for the Assessment and Support of Connected Persons Foster Carers, AFKA Cymru 2025

Competency Framework:

The Skills and Qualities for Kinship Foster Carers in Wales

1. Caring for the Child(ren)

1.1 Providing good care

You need to be able to give the child good care that helps protect and promotes their safety and well-being in accordance with the child's care and support plan. This involves supporting them to reach their potential in all areas of their life which includes meeting their emotional, mental, physical, health, educational, leisure, social, identity, cultural, religious, social or spiritual development needs. The child you are caring for should feel equally part of your family as any other children in the home and you should be able to help them to feel valued for who they are.

1.2 Understanding the child's wishes and feelings and prioritising their needs

You need to understand how the child feels in relation to why they have become looked after and have empathy or the ability to see things from their point of view. You should be able to listen to the child's wishes and feelings and take account of these when you are caring for them. When necessary, you will have to be able to put the child's needs ahead of any support you give to their parents or other adults in the family.

1.3 Helping with separation, loss and/or trauma

Children may have experienced difficult things that affect how they understand their own thoughts and feelings, those of other people and how they understand the world around them. You should be able to understand how any difficult experiences may affect the child's behaviour, now and in the future. You should be able to care for them in a way that helps them feel safe and supported, providing a stable family environment which will promote secure attachments for the child. This involves following the child's care and support plan, following advice given by the team working with the child and asking for advice when needed.

1.4 Working with the child's family

You need to be able to work with people who are important to the child in line with the child's care and support plan. This could be the child's parents, other relatives, or other foster carers. This includes supporting family time (contact) when it is part of the child's care and support plan.

1.5 Setting boundaries and responding to behaviour

You need to be able to set clear rules and limits for the child in a fair way that accounts for their developmental needs. You must be able to guide their behaviour without using physical punishment or harsh treatment. Any behaviour management you use must follow the policies of your fostering service.

1.6 Understanding child development

You need to understand the child's age and stage of development. You need to be able to listen to the child and talk to them in a way that matches their age and level of understanding as they grow.

1.7 Preparing for adulthood

You need to be able to help the child learn the skills they need to become independent and ready for adult life. These skills are developed throughout a child's life, in line with their age and stage of development and should support them to reach their potential and be prepared for the future.

2. Providing a Safe and Caring Environment

2.1 Keeping the child safe

You need to provide a home where the child is safe and feels safe and where they are protected from harm or abuse. Children growing up in foster care may need extra support in this area if their past experiences have meant they find it more difficult to understand risk and safety, you may be asked to care for them in a way that helps them to feel safe, this is sometimes called safer caring or protected caring.

2.2 Understanding vulnerability

You should be aware of any special risks or vulnerabilities the child might face because of things like disability, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or care experience and be able to help them to overcome, manage or reduce any associated risks, vulnerabilities or stigma depending on their individual needs.

2.3 Teaching the child to stay safe

All children need their grown-ups to help them understand how to recognise risky or harmful situations and how to access help and support if they feel unsafe. Children growing up in foster care may need extra support in this area if their past experiences have meant they find it more difficult to understand risk and safety. You should be able to support the child with their understanding as they grow in a way that accounts for their needs and experiences.

2.4 Understanding family risks

You need to understand any risks linked to the child's family and be able to protect them from these risks by following the care plan and working with the professionals involved in the child's plan.

2.5 Handling pressure

If you feel pressure from family members or others to go against the child's care and support plan, you need to be able to seek help and support from your fostering service and or the child's social worker.

3. Working as Part of a Team

3.1 Working with professionals

You need to be able to work well with social workers and other practitioners to support the child and make plans for them. This can include attending meetings, being available for visits, adhering to the policies of your fostering service and ensuring the child you care for is able to meet with the practitioners working with them which can include their social worker, advocate, independent visitor and children's guardian.

3.2 Understanding your role

You need to understand what decisions you are allowed to make for the child and those decisions that need to be made by the child's social worker. If you have a delegated authority agreement you must be able to follow this. You must follow the requirements of the Foster Care Agreement that you have with your fostering service.

3.3 Good communication

You need to be able to share information clearly and listen carefully to others for the benefit of the child. This ensures that everyone can work together to meet the child's needs and support you and your household to provide a safe and caring environment for the child.

3.4 Keeping information private

You must be able to keep personal information about the child and their family private and follow the guidance and policies your fostering service gives you in relation to this.

4. Your wellbeing, support and development

4.1 Understanding how fostering affects you

You need to be able to think about how your own life experiences affect you, your family and your role as a foster carer. Past experiences can make some parts of fostering challenging, an example would be a child's behaviour triggering a memory from a foster carer's own childhood which makes it hard for them to respond to the behaviour in a calm way. It is important that you can understand the impact that fostering may have on you and your family and that you can talk about the impact with your fostering service so that they can support you.

4.2 Using community support

You need be able to use sources of support and other resources in your community and local area if needed to support the child and meet any specific needs identified in the child's plan.

4.3 Learning and development

You should be able to use opportunities to develop knowledge or skills that would help you to meet the child's needs or to prepare for meeting their needs as they grow. This is promoted through the NFF Learning and Development Framework.

4.4 Managing stress and sustaining relationships

You need to be able to continue to care for the child and meet their needs through times of challenge or stress in your own life. This includes sustaining relationships with the child, any important people in the child's life, the fostering service and any other workers involved in meeting the child's needs.

Evidence Matix: Competency Framework: Skills and Qualities for Kinship Foster Carers in Wales		F/S/N*	Where:
1. Caring for the child(ren)			
1.1	Providing good care		
1.2	Understanding the child's wishes and feelings and prioritising their needs		
1.3	Helping with separation, loss and/or trauma		
1.4	Working with the child's family		
1.5	Setting boundaries and responding to behaviour		
1.6	Understanding child development		
1.7	Preparing for adulthood		
2. Providing a safe and caring environment:			
2.1	Keeping the child safe		
2.2	Understanding vulnerability		
2.3	Teaching the child to stay safe		
2.4	Understanding family risks		
2.5	Handling pressure		
3. Working as part of a team:			
3.1	Working with professionals		
3.2	Understanding your role		
3.3	Good communication		
3.4	Keeping information private		
4. Your wellbeing, support and development:			
4.1	Understanding how fostering affects you		
4.2	Using community support		
4.3	Learning and development		
4.4	Managing stress and sustaining relationships		

© AFKA Cymru, 2025

*Key: F= Fully; S = Support needed; N - Not evidenced or cannot be met