

A Chance to Reflect

A Guide for Foster & Kinship Carers

Why this resource?

Caring for children in the out-of-home care system is meaningful, demanding and deeply relational work. This guide supports carers to think about placements, reflect on what children and families need and understand how their own wellbeing shapes their capacity to provide safe, steady care.

Reflections as a Carer

Over the past six months, you have engaged in learning about trauma, attachment, regulation, courageous conversations, sexual development, family contact, hope, and sustainable care. These modules were never designed to simply provide information — they were designed to shape how you think, how you respond, and how you show up in relationship.

This reflection point is not about adding more knowledge.

It is about pausing long enough to notice what has shifted — in your thinking, in your reactions, in your confidence, and in your relationships.

In busy caregiving systems, it is easy to move from one demand to the next without stopping to consolidate growth. Slowing down is a deliberate act. It allows learning to move from:

Information → into practice → into identity.

At both 6 months and 12 months, the purpose of reflection is to:

- Reflect on what has been learned.
- Notice what has changed in everyday practice.
- Identify what feels embedded and more natural.
- Gently adjust what still feels stretched or uncertain.
- Reconnect with your purpose, values, and capacity.
- Strengthen confidence through recognising growth.

Six months is a consolidation point. Twelve months is an integration point.

Reflection builds confidence.

Integration builds sustainability.

Sustainability protects children and carers.

This process is not about perfection. It is about progress, steadiness, and growing self-awareness.



A Chance To Reflect

Continued....

Noticing Change

Growth often happens quietly. It can be easy to overlook small shifts because they feel gradual. Yet small relational changes — shorter recovery times, calmer responses, stronger connection — are significant markers of embedding learning.

You may not respond the same way you did six months ago. That matters.

 Try:

- Write down three things you handle differently now compared to when you began.
- Reflect on where you feel more confident, less reactive, or more patient.
- Consider how your understanding of behaviour has evolved.
- Revisit earlier notes or reflections and compare how situations feel now.

Slowing before Responding

One of the most powerful changes many carers describe is the ability to slow down. Slowing down interrupts automatic reactions and creates space for regulation before response.

When you slow your body and voice, you support the child's nervous system to do the same. This is not passive — it is intentional regulation.

 Try:

- Pause and take one steady breath before responding to behaviour.
- Ask yourself: "What might this behaviour be communicating?"
- Lower your tone, pace and volume intentionally.

Caring For Yourself

Over six months, many carers recognise that sustainable care depends on their own regulation and wellbeing. When you are depleted, everything feels heavier. When you are supported, you have greater capacity for patience, perspective and repair.

Embedding learning includes protecting your capacity as actively as you protect the child's safety.

 Try:

- Schedule regular check-ins with your practitioner — not just when things are hard.
- Identify early signs of stress (irritability, exhaustion, withdrawal) and act sooner rather than later.
- Protect one small daily ritual that grounds you — tea alone, fresh air, journalling, quiet music.

Holding Hope & Perspective

Fostering and kinship care can be deeply rewarding — and deeply heavy. Embedding hope does not mean ignoring difficulty. It means learning to hold growth alongside hardship.

Over the past months, you may have witnessed resilience — in the child, in yourself, in your family. Recognising this strengthens long-term motivation.

 Try:

- Keep a "small wins" list and revisit it monthly.
- Reflect on early challenges and notice how far you've come.
- Reconnect with your original values and reasons for becoming a carer.

Closing Pause

As you complete your 6- or 12-month reflection, ask yourself:

- What feels more natural now than it once did?
- Where do I feel steadier?
- What support do I need for the next stage of this journey?
- What am I proud of — even if no one else sees it?

Learning becomes embedded when we notice it. Growth becomes sustainable when we slow down enough to honour it.

This is not about being a perfect carer. It is about becoming a reflective, steady, and supported one.