Note
This booklet is a resource for applicants to refer to in interviews, but not to take away with them. It enables them to have their own copy of resource sheets to look at, without the need for the assessor to make copies.

The integrity of the material relies on applicants not having the opportunity to consult and prepare responses to case scenarios in advance, so it is not appropriate for such resource sheets to be distributed and accessible to applicants.

For each session there is at least one resource sheet for the applicant to take away with them to prepare for the next interview. These are clearly marked for photocopying with this symbol:
Implementation of *Step by step in Victoria*

*Step by step Victoria* is based on the *Step by step* package developed in New South Wales. The material has been adapted for use by Victorian community service organisations that deliver foster care, including shared family care, adolescent community placement and intensive home-based care.

The Victorian Department of Human Services acknowledges that copyright of the *Step by step* and *Shared stories, shared lives* packages is held by and remains the property of the New South Wales Department of Community Services. The New South Wales Department of Community Services has granted permission for the Department of Human Services to adapt and use these packages in Victoria.
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Introducing *Step by step Victoria*

This booklet is part of *Step by step Victoria*, a resource package to assist foster care community service organisations in assessing potential foster carers.

The package contains seven booklets.

**Background paper**
An outline of the research and practice base for the package.

**Familiarisation guide**
A detailed outline for a two-day workshop to familiarise assessors with the package and how to use it.

**Foster care information pack**
A resource for people making enquiries about being a foster carer which can be adapted to the particular needs of your community service organisation. This information pack was developed in Victoria by the Department of Human Services in collaboration with the Foster Care Association of Victoria, the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, the CREATE Foundation and home-based care community service organisations.

**Manual for assessors**
A detailed outline of the assessment activities undertaken with applicants.

**Applicant booklet**
A collection of handouts and worksheets used by the applicant during the assessment interviews.

**Assessment record**
A tool for recording and analysing information gathered in the assessment process.

**Assessment resources**
A collection of materials to support the assessment process.
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- Barnardos Australia
- Berry Street Victoria
- British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering
- Centacare Sydney
- KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc
- Macarthur District Temporary Family Care
- National Foster Care Association, Britain
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- Barnardos Australia: criteria for applicants used in the Foster care information pack
- KARI Aboriginal Resources Inc: assessment process flowchart in the Foster care information pack
- New South Wales Department of Community Services: covering letter to applicant’s doctor and the code of conduct for authorised foster carers in the Assessment resources.
Overview of Information exchange session

Purpose of session
The purpose of this session is for applicants and assessors to exchange information about:
• the assessment process
• requirements of foster carers
• the applicant’s household.

Topics to be covered

Part 1 – with everyone together
1. Introduction
2. Our household
3. Overview of information pack and policies
4. Response to information:
   • Community service organisation policy on health and hygiene
   • Community service organisation policy on discipline
   • Community service organisation policy on families of children and young people in care

Part 2
2a: With adult applicants only
• Applicant’s questions
• Information on how to apply to be a foster carer and next steps

2b: With children and young people only (if applicable)
• Children and young people’s perspective on their household

Part 3 – with everyone together
• Conclusion
Preparing a life history

Each applicant to complete a separate life history.

There are different ways to prepare your life history. Choose the one that suits you best.

1. Life story

Write your story by writing an answer to each of the questions below.

Ages 0–5 years
- When and where were you born (if known)?
- Who lived in your household?
- What was home like during this time?
- What were the most significant relationships for you during this time?
- What significant events happened in your family at this time?

Ages 5–12 years
- What was it like to live in your household at this time?
- What are some of your strong memories of this time?
- What was your experience of school like?
- What were the most significant relationships for you during this time?
- What significant events happened in your family at this time?

Ages 13–18 years
- What was it like living in your household during those years?
- What did you enjoy about school? What was difficult?
- What were the most significant relationships for you during this time?
- What significant events happened in your family at this time?

Adulthood
- Describe the significant relationships with partners you have had (length of time, reason for ending and so on).
- How important has education been in your life?
- What sort of work have you done? How important has work been in your life?
- What losses and traumas have you experienced in your life (for example, a home, job, relationship, infertility, person)?
- What other significant events have shaped your life?
- If you have children:
  - What have been the rewards and challenges of parenting?
  - Have you ever lived apart from your children? What was that like?
2. Life tape

Tape your story by recording an answer to each of the questions listed under 'Life story'.

You can use a cassette player or a video recorder. Remember to keep each answer relatively brief. The tape should be no more than 20 minutes!

3. Life line

Get a long piece of paper (or join together several sheets with sticky tape) and mark the following:

• your birth date and place if known (at the beginning of the line)
• your current age (at the end of the line)
• the houses you have lived in, and the people who were in the household
• the schools and other educational institutions you went to
• any significant health issues
• start of significant relationships
• end of significant relationships
• birth of children (if applicable)
• significant losses and traumas (for example, a home, job, relationship, person, infertility)
• your jobs
• travel
• any other significant events in your life.

(If you would like to, you can use colours, drawings, pictures and so on to highlight significant events for you.)
Overview of Interview A

Purpose of interview
The purpose of this session is to explore the applicant’s ability to draw on and apply appropriately their personal experiences in dealing with the tasks of foster caring.

Topics to be covered
1. Introduction
2. Motivation to become a foster carer
3. Kinship diagram
4. Life history:
   a. Family attachments
   b. Grief and loss
   c. Response to change and stress
5. Impact on foster carer’s own children (if applicable)
6. Fertility
   a. Infertility (if applicable)
   b. Hopes for own children (if applicable)
7. Conclusion
What motivates foster carers?

1. ‘I’ve had a good life, I want to give something back.’
2. ‘I can’t have a child of my own at this time.’
3. ‘Every child has a right to a home and to be loved. I can do that.’
4. ‘Some parents are doing it tough out there. I want to help them and their children.’
5. ‘I love kids; my life seems empty without them.’
6. ‘My child would love a playmate.’
7. ‘It seems a great way to work from home; I really need a little extra income.’
8. ‘I want to give a child the chance of a brand new start.’
9. ‘I had a difficult childhood. I know what some kids go through and I want to help them.’
10. ‘I want to have fun with a kid, planning and going to lots of places and excursions with them.’
11. Other _________________________________  
______________________________________  
______________________________________  
______________________________________
Interview A: follow-up checklist

One of the key qualities of foster carers is having the ability to appropriately draw on and apply their personal experiences in dealing with the tasks of foster caring.

1. My motivations for wanting to be a foster carer would help me to focus on the needs of a child or young person in my care, not just my own needs.
   YES/NO

2. The relationships I have had in my life, including my own childhood experience, would assist me to offer a secure relationship to a child or young person in foster care.
   YES/NO

3. My experiences of loss and grief would help me to understand and appropriately deal with the loss and grief experienced by a child or young person in foster care.
   YES/NO

4. I am able to deal constructively with stress and seek appropriate support.
   YES/NO

5. I recognise that as a foster carer I will be caring for someone else’s child or young person and that it will not be the same experience as having my own child.
   YES/NO

6. Other comments:
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

   Resource Sheet A.3
Overview of Interview B

Purpose of interview
The purpose of this session is to explore the applicant’s ability to work effectively as part of a team.

Topics to be covered
1. Introduction
2. Review of assessment process
3. Team work with partner (if applicable)
4. Dealing with conflict
5. Networks of support
6. Working as a community service organisation team
7. Conclusion
Jim and Kay’s story

Jim and Kay are foster carers with a community service organisation. The caseworker has just dropped around and let them know that the community service organisation has just arranged some new details for contact between Mary-Lee, the child they foster, and her family. The new arrangements are not convenient for Jim and Kay.

Jim and Kay feel angry they weren’t consulted before the arrangements were made. The last time changes were made to make it easier for Mary-Lee to see her family, her family was unable to arrange transport and missed the visit altogether. On other occasions, Mary-Lee has stayed with her family and has been brought home much later than expected.
Discussion questions: Jim and Kay’s story

• If you were Jim or Kay, what might your next steps be?

• A case conference is an opportunity for all the people who are involved with a child or young person to meet together to plan and coordinate their activities:
  – What are some benefits of Jim and Kay raising the issue of contact visits at the next case conference?
  – What ideas could the people at the case conference consider to promote the relationship between Mary-Lee and her family?

• How should Jim and Kay raise their concern with Mary-Lee’s mother if Mary-Lee continues to get home late after her contact visits?

• Jim and Kay are considering going on holidays at a particular time with Mary-Lee. What should they do before making definite plans?
One of the key qualities of foster carers is working well with others, including within one’s own personal relationships and networks of support, as well as with those directly involved with the child or young person in care, such as community service organisation staff and family members of the child or young person.

1. I get strong personal and emotional support from people I am close to which would help me as a foster carer.
   YES/NO

2. I am part of a network within my community which can help me in the tasks involved in foster caring.
   YES/NO

3. I support the importance of assisting any child or young person in my care to establish and maintain a positive relationship with their family and other significant people in their life.
   YES/NO

4. I am able to communicate clearly and constructively with others, even in times when I may be in conflict or have a disagreement with them.
   YES/NO

5. Other comments:_____________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________
What some children in fostering families have said about fostering

• ‘I never had a real sister; it was great to have a foster sister. She broke some of my stuff, but we got over it.’

• ‘The best thing was seeing a child improve’.

• ‘It was hard to have time with my mum on her own after we fostered. She seemed so busy all the time.’

• ‘Growing up in a foster family meant there were always other kids around.’

• ‘I’m proud of my family. We share our family and help children.’

• ‘I didn’t like it when they mucked up at school. It was embarrassing for me.’

• ‘I don’t like it when the children tell you some of the horrible things that have happened to them.’

• ‘You have to share your house and your family. I never had my own bedroom. That’s hard but it was worth it. We have a bigger family now.’
Overview of Interview C

Purpose of interview
The purpose of this session is to explore ways of promoting the positive development of children and young people in foster care.

Topics to be covered
1. Introduction
2. Experiences of being parented
3. Caring for a child or young person
4. Being a foster carer – including Chris’s story
5. Jai’s story – the foster carer’s role
6. Conclusion
Chris’s story

You have just had Chris placed with you. Chris is sitting at the kitchen table having breakfast. You need to catch a bus with Chris in ten minutes to get to school/kindy/a sporting event.

Suddenly Chris says to you, ‘My mum doesn’t cut toast like this. I want to ring my mum.’
Discussion questions: Chris’s story

• What might be your first ‘instinctive’ response in this situation?  
  *(This may not be the best response to act on, but may be your 
  first automatic thought or feeling.)*

• How would you deal with your response?

• What are some of the different issues you need to consider 
  when responding to Chris?

• What may Chris be feeling in this situation?

• What might you say or do next with Chris which could be 
  helpful for Chris in this situation?
Jai’s story: version 1
(For those applying to provide short or long term care)

Part 1

Jai is a six-year old with red hair, freckles and a lovely smile. He is quite chubby and has severe asthma. He finds it difficult to keep still and be quiet, but he is really good at video games. He enjoys talking with people, but is not yet able to read or write at all.

Marie, Jai’s mother, is a meticulous housekeeper and feeds and dresses Jai carefully. She follows a very particular diet based on the writings of a small religious group. In particular she avoids egg-based products. She works shifts at a local supermarket.

Jai was reported to the child protection authorities as a child at risk of harm when teachers at his school raised concerns about his interaction with other children involving sexual activities. It was clear through Jai’s conversations and drawings that he had experienced sexual abuse involving a male.

Marie appears to be unaware of and unable to meet many of Jai’s needs. She has had a series of boyfriends living with her, but denies that any of them could have abused Jai. Her punishments for Jai include locking him in a dark cupboard for long periods of time and gagging him when he ‘talks too much’. She talks about Jai as a child who is destined to damage himself and others.

The court has decided that Jai’s needs will be best met through a long term placement in a foster care setting.

Part 2

Jai has just been placed with a foster carer, Olga. Jai will be seeing his mother regularly. His mother sends him cards and occasionally gifts. Olga keeps these in a special box with other memorabilia of Jai’s, such as photos, school awards and his drawings.

Jai is now in his second year of schooling but is still operating at a pre-school level, unable to associate letters and sounds. There is some question about whether Jai has an intellectual disability. Jai still needs a great deal of assistance to get dressed. He calls for help to have his bottom wiped after going to the toilet. He soils himself regularly.

Jai often tells stories to get out of trouble.

Jai is on medication for asthma. He has required treatment at hospital on three occasions because of asthma attacks. His mother has requested that his foster carer respect her religious beliefs, which means that Jai should not eat eggs or any products made of eggs.
Discussion questions: Jai’s story version 1

• What sorts of skills could Olga help Jai to develop?
• How might Olga help with Jai’s schooling?
• Olga is used to cooking with eggs. If you were Olga, what would you do to deal with Jai’s family’s religious ideas?
• If you were Olga, what strategies might you use to deal with Jai’s story telling?
• Olga thinks it would be beneficial for Jai to be involved in a regular sporting activity. If you were Olga, how would you involve Jai in organising this?
• Even when children or young people have been hurt by their parent, they usually still have strong connections with them. How may Jai feel as a result of not being able to live with his mum? If you were Olga, what could you do to support Jai? How could the memorabilia collected by Jai and Olga, such as photos and letters, help Jai to deal with his separation from his mother?
• One day Jai comes home from school very angry. He usually gives Olga a big hug when he gets home, but today he pushes her away. He goes to his room. When Olga looks in a few minutes later she finds that the new curtains she has made for Jai’s room have been cut into pieces. Jai looks at Olga and says, ‘Someone has come into my room and wrecked the curtains’.
  – If you were Olga, how might you feel?
  – What would you want to do?
  – Would it be appropriate to act on your first response? Why? If no, how would you prevent yourself from acting on that response?
  – What are some ways Olga could deal with the situation constructively?
• If Jai had particular special needs (for example, hearing loss or epilepsy), how could Olga ensure she is caring for Jai appropriately?
• It is important that children and young people in care keep in touch with their cultural identity. Assume Jai’s family is from a different ethnic group from Olga. If you were Olga, what are some things you could do to assist him to develop his ethnic and cultural identity?
• It is important that Aboriginal children and young people in care keep in touch with their community.
  – For Aboriginal foster carers: Assume Jai’s family is from a different Aboriginal community group from Olga’s. If you were Olga, what are some things you could do to help him to maintain his cultural identity?
  – For non-Aboriginal foster carers: Assume Jai’s family includes Aboriginal members. If you were Olga, what are some things you could do to help Jai to develop a positive Aboriginal identity?
• Olga wants Jai to feel positive about himself. If you were Olga, what are some ways you might help Jai to develop a positive self-identity?
Jai’s story: version 2
(For those applying to provide respite care)

Part 1

Jai is a six-year old with red hair, freckles and a lovely smile. He is quite chubby and has severe asthma. He finds it difficult to keep still and be quiet, but he is really good at video games. He enjoys talking with people, but is not yet able to read or write at all.

Marie, Jai’s mother, is a meticulous housekeeper and feeds and dresses Jai carefully. She follows a very particular diet based on the writings of a small religious group. In particular she avoids egg-based products. She works shifts at a local supermarket.

Jai was reported to the child protection authorities as a child at risk of harm when teachers at his school raised concerns about his interaction with other children involving sexual activities. It was clear through Jai’s conversations and drawings that he had experienced sexual abuse involving a male.

Marie appears unaware of and unable to meet many of Jai’s needs. She has had a series of boyfriends living with her, but denies that any of them could have abused Jai. Her punishments for Jai include locking him in a dark cupboard for long periods of time and gagging him when he ‘talks too much’. She talks about Jai as a child who is destined to damage himself and others.

The court has decided that Jai’s needs will be best met through a long term placement in a foster care setting.

Part 2

Jai has just been placed with a long term foster carer, Olga. Jai will be seeing his mother regularly. His mother sends him cards and occasionally gifts.

Jean, Bill and their family will be providing respite care for Jai for one weekend each month. This will provide Olga with a regular break, and extend the care and support network available to Jai.

Jai is now in his second year of schooling but is still operating at a pre-school level, unable to associate letters and sounds. There is some question about whether Jai has an intellectual disability. Jai still needs a great deal of assistance to get dressed. He calls for help to have his bottom wiped after going to the toilet. He soils himself regularly.

Jai often tells stories to get out of trouble.

Jai is on medication for asthma. He has required treatment at hospital on three occasions because of asthma attacks. His mother has requested that his foster carer respect her religious beliefs, which means Jai should not eat eggs or any products made of eggs.
Discussion questions: Jai’s story version 2

- How could Jean and Bill assist with Jai’s schooling?
- Jean and Bill are used to cooking with eggs. If you were them, what would you do to deal with Jai’s family’s religious ideas?
- If you were caring for Jai, how would you deal with Jai’s story telling?
- Bill and Jean think it would be beneficial for Jai to be involved in a regular sporting activity. If you were caring for Jai, who do you think you would discuss this with?
- Even when children or young people have been hurt by their parent, they usually still have strong bonds with them. Bill and Jean notice that Jai is often quite agitated when he stays with them soon after contact with his mother, Marie. He is quite touchy and often very disobedient. If you were Jai’s foster carer, how would you handle this?
- One day Jai arrives at Bill and Jean’s place very angry. He usually gives them a big hug when he gets there, but today he pushes them away. He goes to the room he sleeps in. When Jean looks in a few minutes later he has done a poo on the floor and is starting to smear it on the new curtains which Jean has just finished making.
  - If you were Jai’s foster carer, how might you feel?
  - What would you want to do?
  - Would it be appropriate to act on your first response? Why? If no, how would you prevent yourself from acting on that response?
  - What are some ways that a foster carer could deal with the situation constructively?
- If Jai had particular special needs (for example, hearing loss or epilepsy), how could Bill and Jean ensure they are caring for Jai appropriately?
- It is important that children and young people in care keep in touch with their cultural identity. Assume Jai’s family is from a different ethnic group from Bill and Jean. What might they do to help him to develop a positive identity?
- It is important that Aboriginal children and young people in care keep in touch with their community.
  - For Aboriginal carers:
    Assume Jai’s family is from a different Aboriginal community group from Bill and Jean. If you were Bill and Jean, what are some things you could do to help him to maintain his cultural identity?
  - For non-Aboriginal carers:
    Assume Jai’s family includes Aboriginal members. If you were Bill and Jean, what are some things you could do to help Jai to develop a positive Aboriginal identity?
- Bill and Jean want Jai to feel positive about himself. If you were Bill and Jean, what are some ways you might help Jai to develop a positive self-identity?
Jai’s story: version 3
(For those applying to provide care for adolescents)

Part 1
Marie, Jai’s mother, is a meticulous housekeeper and fed and dressed Jai carefully. She follows a very particular diet based on the writings of a small religious group. In particular she avoids egg-based products. She works shifts at a local supermarket.

When Jai was in primary school, he was reported to the child protection authorities as a child at risk of harm when teachers at his school raised concerns about his interaction with other children involving sexual activities. It was clear through Jai’s conversations and drawings that he had experienced sexual abuse involving a male.

Marie appears unaware of and unable to meet many of Jai’s needs. She has had a series of boyfriends living with her, but denies that any of them could have abused Jai. Her punishments for Jai included locking him in a dark cupboard for long periods of time and gagging him when he ‘talked too much’. She talked about Jai as a child who is destined to damage himself and others.

Jai was placed in long term care with a foster carer, Olga. Jai sees his mother regularly. She sends him cards and occasionally gifts. Olga encourages Jai to keep these cards in a special box with his other memorabilia, such as photos, school awards and his old drawings.

Part 2
Jai progressed well in Olga’s care, but new issues have emerged as he has reached adolescence. Jai is now aged 15. He is sometimes withdrawn and struggles to make friends his own age, preferring much younger or older acquaintances. He is behind at school and sometimes truants. He talks to Olga a lot about girls and what sort of girlfriend he wants. He comments a lot about how much he is growing.
Discussion questions: Jai’s story version 3

- What sorts of skills could Olga help Jai to develop?
- How could Olga assist with Jai’s schooling?
- Olga is used to cooking with eggs. If you were Olga, what would you do to deal with Jai’s family’s religious ideas?
- Olga thinks it would be beneficial for Jai to be involved in a regular sporting activity or other exercise. If you were Olga, how would you start to organise this?
- If you were Jai’s foster carer, how would you ensure Jai has appropriate sexual information and education?
- Jai has been looking forward to his fifteenth birthday celebration. He is excited about go-karting, so he and Olga are planning the occasion. When Olga asks if there is anyone from school he wants to ask, Jai’s mood changes. ‘As if’, he says. ‘They’ll keep asking me why my real mother isn’t organising my party’. Swearing loudly, he leaves the kitchen, deliberately pulling the tablecloth with him so that plates and glasses fall on the floor and shatter.
  - If you were Olga, how might you feel?
  - What would you want to do?
  - Would it be appropriate to act on your first response? Why? If no, how would you prevent yourself from acting on that response?
  - What are some ways a foster carer could deal with the situation constructively?
- How could Jai’s memorabilia (cards, photos and so on) assist him to deal with the fact he has two families: his foster family and his birth family?
- If Jai had a particular special need (for example, hearing loss or epilepsy), how could Olga ensure she is caring for Jai appropriately?
- It is important that children and young people in care keep in touch with their cultural identity. Assume Jai’s family is from a different ethnic group from Olga’s. What might she do to help him to develop a positive identity?
- It is important that Aboriginal children and young people in care keep in touch with their community.
  - For Aboriginal carers: Assume Jai’s family is from a different Aboriginal community group from Olga’s. If you were Olga, what are some things you could do to help him to maintain his cultural identity?
  - For non-Aboriginal carers: Assume Jai’s family includes Aboriginal members. If you were Olga, what are some things you could do to help Jai to develop a positive Aboriginal identity?
- Olga wants Jai to feel positive about himself. If you were Olga, what are some ways you might help Jai to develop a positive self-identity?
Interview C: follow-up checklist

One of the key qualities of foster carers is to promote the positive development of children and young people in out-of-home care.

1. Do I treat each child or young person as an individual, with their own social, emotional and intellectual needs?
   
   YES/NO

2. Will I ensure children and young people in my care get access to information and services to meet their specific cultural needs (for example, through the Aboriginal Lands Council, language schools, mosques and so on)?
   
   YES/NO

3. Can I listen to and encourage children and young people to express their feelings and ideas?
   
   YES/NO

4. Do I encourage children and young people to be involved in all decisions that affect them?
   
   YES/NO

5. Can I help a child or young person to maintain contact with his or her family while they are in my care?
   
   YES/NO

6. Do I make sure children and young people get services that help them to develop?
   
   YES/NO

7. Other comments: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________
1. What sexual issues are important to talk about with your children or young people? Why?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

2. A child or young person is sexually abused when any person uses their authority or power over the child or young person to engage in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse involves a wide range of sexual activity and may include fondling genitals, masturbation, oral sex, or vaginal or anal penetration by finger, penis or any other object.

Sexual abuse can include behaviour that does not involve actual touching, such as forcing a child or young person to watch pornography or masturbation, voyeurism and exhibitionism. It can also include exploitation through pornography or prostitution.

Children under 16 years of age cannot give consent to sexual activity (except under very strict guidelines as identified in the Crimes Act (1958) (Vic)). Consent is not a defence to sexual abuse of children and young people.

How could you prevent a child or young person in your care from being sexually abused?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

3. Have you had any experience of child sexual abuse? This may be your own experience or that of a person close to you. *(If not, go on to the final question on this sheet.)*

- In what ways did the abuse affect your life as a child and as an adult?
- How do you deal with the impact of the abuse in your life?
- How might the abuse influence you as a foster carer?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

4. If a child or young person in your care disclosed to you that they had been sexually abused, what emotional response might you have to this?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Questionnaire: sexual abuse and children and young people
Overview of Interview D

Purpose of interview
The purpose of this session is to provide an opportunity to explore the ability of the applicant to provide a safe environment that is free of abuse.

Topics to be covered
1. Introduction
2. Impact of abuse on children and young people
3. Responding to children or young people who have been abused
4. Child sexual abuse
5. Responding to a child or young person who has been sexually abused
6. Reducing risk of abuse
7. Confidentiality
8. Next steps
Mandi’s story

Mandi has experienced emotional abuse. As a young child she was subjected to constant criticism and very rarely experienced praise and affection. She was often scapegoated for anything that went wrong in her family.

Even after a number of years in foster care, she finds it difficult to identify anything that is good about herself or other people. She receives compliments with suspicion and is verbally aggressive in many situations.

Mandi’s case plan includes monthly contact with her mother. Sometimes these visits go well, but often arrangements are changed at the last minute. Mandi’s mother will make extravagant promises to Mandi which she finds difficult to keep.

Mandi is in your care. She has come home from school with a report that has many negative comments on it. She was supposed to stay with her mother this weekend, but she got a telephone message saying the visit will need to be postponed because her mother is unwell. Mandi’s room is a mess, although she said she would tidy it. You want to discuss with her some of the issues raised in her report, including her difficult relationship with one particular teacher. She heads straight outside to feed the pet, which is one of her daily chores.
Discussion questions: Mandi’s story

- What do you think is happening for Mandi?
- How might you deal with the situation?
- If Mandi were six, would you have a different approach than if she were 14?
- Imagine Mandi has been in your care for three weeks. Now imagine she has been in your care for three years. Describe the differences between the approaches you might take in these two cases.
- How would you approach the situation if you had met the teacher and found him or her to be insensitive to Mandi’s needs?
Robert’s story

Robert is a child in your care. Robert was sexually abused by an uncle over a long period of time. The situation caused great family conflict, with some members excusing the uncle’s behaviour because of his ill health.

Robert blames himself for the break up of his family. He often engages in behaviour in which he damages himself or his possessions.
Discussion questions: Robert’s story

- What might Robert be feeling?
- How might you respond to Robert if you were his foster carer?
Possible ‘house guidelines’

- Adults should always wear clothes when walking about the house.

- Wrestling games cease as soon as a child or young person says ‘stop’.

- Cuddles are to be given in public spaces (for example, the lounge room or kitchen), not in beds.

- Bath younger children with the door to the bathroom open.

- Children should not play in bedrooms with closed doors.

- Adults don’t use the toilet when children are in the bathroom.

- Children should not travel in the front seat of the car. Children should always travel in the back seat even if there are only two people in the car.
Scale of sharing information

1 2 3 4 5 6

I freely share personal information even with total strangers.

I never share information about myself.
Bianca and Jamie’s story

You are a foster carer who has the care of two children, Bianca and Jamie. The children have been physically abused and there is a suspicion they may have been sexually abused.

Soon after you get the care of Bianca and Jamie you get into a conversation with some parents at the school. They are curious about the children’s background. The parents know you are a foster carer.
Discussion questions: Bianca and Jamie’s story

What might you say and why?

A. I'm caring for the children because they are not able to live with their parents at the moment.

B. The children have experienced physical abuse so they need a lot of nurture and care at the moment. It is also possible they have been sexually abused.

C. Please explain to your children that Bianca and Jamie have had a really hard time. Their parents didn’t take very good care of them, so it would be great if the kids in their classes were really nice to them.

D. That's none of your business.

E. Other:

______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________
Which child or young person would you be able to provide care for?

1. Age range

2. Sex

3. Would you be able to take siblings (more than one child from the same family?)
   
   Mark one □ Yes □ No

4. Would you consider providing care for a child or young person who:
   (mark if applicable)
   
   □ is from a different religion from yours?
   □ is from a different nationality from you?
   □ has a physical disability?
   □ has a development delay (for example, is a slow learner or has an intellectually disability)?

5. What needs and behaviours might you find difficult to handle and need more training in?

   ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________

6. Any other comments?

   ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________