



Peep

Shortlisted for Family Learning in the Early Years in partnership with Cache Alumni

Peep is a UK charity that supports parents and carers with children's learning. Through training professionals and working with families, the organisation encourages parents/carers and children to learn alongside each other to improve the child's life chances and help them to become confident communicators and active learners.

The experiences of foster carers are often unique and highly emotional – from welcoming children into their homes to having to say goodbye and everything in between. This is why the Peep Foster Care Training Course was set up – to create a safe learning environment in which foster carers can engage in learning alongside the child in their care, whilst participating in an accredited programme at the same time.

Playing, exploring, creating and learning

The sessions during this course are hands-on and bring together verbal and physical activities between foster carers, practitioners and children to facilitate learning. They encourage children to play and explore using props and sensory experiences to bring stories to life – think eating porridge oats whilst re-enacting Goldilocks and the Three Bears!

Children are also encouraged to explore active learning as well as to create and think critically, such as through "mark making" with a wide variety of tools including rice, brushes, chalk, paints and paper. Importantly, all activities can be replicated easily in the home of the foster carer – allowing for the replication of these engaging experiences outside of the course's sessions.

Achieving accredited certification

Foster carers are highly committed individuals who take their roles as 'professional parents' very seriously, and as such, the course is shaped around meeting their needs – for example, delivery is face-to-face, which carers feel strongly about due to the confidential nature of the role and wanting to share their experiences.

Importantly, the course allows them to work towards an accredited Level 2 Peep NOCN unit – Supporting Babies' and Young Children's Early Literacy Development – or to add units to complete a full certificate titled NOCN Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Early Learning at Home.



Peepie

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This course has now been running for a number of years and has helped several foster carers to complete these units, with several carers having returned to complete additional units towards the full certificate.

Creating camaraderie

Outcomes achieved by the programme include carers reporting that they had improved their home learning environment and that they understood more about children's early literacy development and how to support it. The interactive sessions themselves were also of direct benefit to the children who attended.

Beyond this, the foster carers on this course have provided each other with peer support and many have gone on to build lasting friendships and networks of support. One foster carer said of the course: "There is a real camaraderie. As foster carers, you can't go into any standard group because you can't discuss the things you need to discuss, because of confidentiality. So, these courses are a place to share experiences and learn as you do that.

"It opens your eyes. You don't realise how much teaching you're doing for [the child] in a normal day."

Crucially, the learning on this course also helped foster carers to apply their learning to both the foster children they currently have in their care, but also those they might care for in the future – allowing them to carry forth their knowledge and ensuring that many other children go on to benefit.