

EVIDENCE ANNEX

Support for Foster Carers Practice Guide

Introduction

This Annex sets out the evidence underpinning each of the seven recommendations specified in the Foster Care Practice Guide. Influenced by our evidence toolkit standards, the table pulls out the key methodological information which defines the strength of evidential certainty behind our recommendations. It also identifies the qualitative evidence which underpins our principles. A [reference list](#) of studies is provided.



Department
for Education

For more information on the evidence underpinning this Guide:

- Technical annex on methodology: foundations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/foster-care-practice-guide-technical-annex.pdf
- Systematic review: foundations.org.uk/our-work/publications/equity-focused-systematic-review-interventions-foster-carers-adoptive-parents

Go to the Foster Care Practice Guide: foundations.org.uk/toolkit/practice-guides/foster-care

Find out more about the series of Practice Guides: foundations.org.uk/toolkit/practice-guides



Evidence underpinning recommendations (narrative synthesis)

Recommendation 1. Provide foster carers with evidence-based multi-level support to improve a range of outcomes [*Strong*]

| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blair 2018; Mersky et al, 2015; Mersky et al, 2016 | RCT | Intervention: 83 Control: 46 | Foster carers and children in a licensed, nonrelative foster home in the United States. Children were between three and six years old, and scored in the clinical range for externalising problems on the Eyberg Child-Behaviour Inventory (ECBI) according to foster carer ratings | Low | <p>Mersky et al (2015; 2016) and Blair (2018) evaluated Parent–Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) by comparing three conditions: brief PCIT, extended PCIT and a wait-list control.</p> <p>The Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory (ECBI) was used to measure disruptive behaviours at baseline, eight weeks post-baseline and 14 weeks post-baseline.</p> <p>A small but significant intervention effect was found for ECBI Problem behaviour scores, with the combined PCIT groups showing both a greater overall decrease over time (linear $p = .006$, $ES = .06$) and a more pronounced early improvement compared with the control group (quadratic $p = .004$, $ES = .07$).</p> <p>Permanency was measured using administrative data in the 12 months following baseline. Permanent placements were defined as adoption, guardianship or reunification.</p> <p>Children in the combined intervention groups were significantly more likely to achieve permanence within 12 months post-baseline than those in the control group ($p = .030$; 95% CI [1.10, 6.31]).</p> |



| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
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| Midgley et al, 2026 | RCT | Intervention: 271 Control: 253 | Foster carers (including kinship carers) of a child aged four to 13 years | Low | <p>Midgley et al (2026) evaluated the Reflective Fostering Programme, comparing to business-as-usual support.</p> <p>Carer defined problems were measured using the Carer Defined Problems Scale. Carers identified the three most significant concerns/problems in relation to the child in their care and indicated the severity of each at baseline, four months and 12 months post-baseline.</p> <p>The intervention group showed statistically significant improvements in carer defined problems at four months ($p = .015$), compared to usual care (but the difference was no longer statistically significant at 12 months).</p> |
| Chamberlain, Moreland and Reid, 1992 | RCT | Intervention: 31 Control: 41 | Children aged 4 to 7 years in foster care between 1988 and 1990 in the United States and their foster parents. Children were expected to have been in care for at least three months | Some concerns | <p>Chamberlain, Moreland and Reid (1992) evaluated Enhanced Support & Training (EST) through three group comparisons: carers who received enhanced support and training plus an extra \$70/month ($n = 31$), carers who received the extra \$70/month only ($n = 14$), and carers receiving no added support or payment ($n = 27$).</p> <p>Child behavioural problems were measured using the Parent Daily Report (PDR) at baseline and 3 months post-baseline. Placement stability was measured using administrative data to establish the number of successful days in care. A “successful” day meant the child remained in their study foster home; days were considered “unsuccessful” if the child ran away, moved to another foster home, or was placed in residential care. This was measured over the two-year study period.</p> <p>The ES&T intervention group showed a significantly larger reduction in children’s daily problem behaviours when compared to the other two conditions (but p-value was not reported). Children in the intervention group experienced significantly more successful days in care than those in the other two study conditions ($F = 3.45, p < .04$).</p> |



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|--------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Farmer et al, 2010 | RCT | Intervention: 137 Control: 110 | Children and young people who lived in treatment foster care homes and their treatment parents in the United States | Some concerns | <p>Farmer (2010) evaluated Together Facing the Challenge (TFTC) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Child emotional and behavioural wellbeing was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score, the Parent Daily Report (PDR) and the Behavioural and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS). Outcomes were measured at baseline, 6-month and 12-month follow up.</p> <p>Rates of change on the PDR, SDQ and BERS were all significantly greater for the intervention group than the control group. At 6 months, these group-by-time effects were significant for all three measures (PDR $p < .01$, SDQ $p < .001$, BERS $p < .05$). At 12 months, the effect remained significant only for the PDR ($p < .01$).</p> |
| Lynch et al, 2017; Pears 2012, 2013, 2016; | RCT | Intervention: 113 Control: 106 | Children in relative or nonrelative foster care and their carers in the United States who are entering their first year of school | Some concerns | <p>Lynch et al (2017); and Pears (2012; 2013; 2016) evaluated Kids in Transition to School (KITS) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Early literacy skills were measured using subtests of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Concepts About Print Test and a caregiver rating of pre-reading skills measure developed for the study. Child self-regulation was measured using composite scores for inhibitory control, behavioural regulation and emotional regulation derived from Children's Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ) subscales, Brief Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool Version (BRIEF-P) subscales, two direct tasks (Go/No-Go; Flanker), Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) subscales and Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC) subscales. Measures were administered at baseline (T1, beginning of summer prior to school), and T2 (end of summer prior to school entry).</p> |



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| | | | | | <p>The intervention group showed statistically significant improvements in early literacy skills ($p < .05$, ES: .26) and self-regulation ($p < .05$, ES: .18).</p> <p>Internalising and externalising child behaviour were measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) which was used to calculate days free from internalising behaviour (IFD) and days free from externalising behaviour (EFD) over 12 months.</p> <p>The intervention group showed significant improvements in both internalising and externalising behaviours compared with the foster care control group (FCC), with significantly higher IFDs ($M = 310.5$, $SD = 78.8$ vs. FCC $M = 284.5$, $SD = 101.5$; $p = .016$) and significantly higher EFDs ($M = 218.6$, $SD = 102.4$ vs. FCC $M = 192.0$, $SD = 104.6$; $p = .049$).</p> <p>Positive attitudes towards alcohol use were measured using an adapted version of the Monitoring the Future National Survey Questionnaire. Positive attitudes towards antisocial behaviour were measured using a 2-item measure created for this study. Self-competence was measured using the Global Self-Worth Scale of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC). Measures were administered in third grade when children were 9 years old, approximately 4 years after the intervention.</p> <p>There were significant reductions in positive attitudes towards alcohol use ($p < .05$) and positive attitudes toward antisocial behaviour ($p < .05$), as well as significant improvements in self-competence ($p < .01$) when comparing the intervention with the control group.</p> |



| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|-----------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ott et al, 2020 | QED | Intervention: 288 Control: 2,968 | 3,256 fostering households in the United Kingdom | Some concerns | <p>Ott et al (2020) evaluated the Mockingbird Home Hub Model identifying a matched comparison group of families who did not receive the programme but were similar on key characteristics, comparing outcomes between the two groups.</p> <p>Carer retention and placement options were measured using administrative data from the Ofsted fostering dataset.</p> <p>There were significant positive effects on foster carer retention and placement options. Households participating in Mockingbird were less likely to de-register than those who were not participating in the programme ($p < 0.001$) between 2016/17 and 2018/19. Households participating in Mockingbird were also less likely to have an unavailable placement than those who were not participating ($p = .004$ unadjusted; $p = .03$ adjusted).</p> |



Recommendation 2. Provide foster carers with evidence- based positive child behaviour support to improve children’s behavioural outcomes [Strong]

| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mersky et al, 2015; Mersky et al, 2016 | RCT | Intervention: 83 Control: 46 | Foster carers and children in a licensed, nonrelative foster home in the United States. Children were between 3 and 6 years old and scored in the clinical range for externalising problems on the Eyberg Child-Behaviour Inventory (ECBI) according to foster carer ratings | Low | Mersky et al (2015; 2016) evaluated Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) by comparing three conditions: brief PCIT, extended PCIT and a wait-list control. The Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory (ECBI) was used to measure disruptive behaviours at baseline, 8 weeks post-baseline and 14 weeks post-baseline. A small but significant intervention effect was found for reduced ECBI Problem behaviour scores, with the combined PCIT groups showing both a greater overall decrease over time (linear $p = .006$, $ES = .06$) and a more pronounced early improvement compared with the control group (quadratic $p = .004$, $ES = .07$). |
| Moody et al, 2020 | RCT | Intervention: 204 Control: 108 | Foster or kinship carers currently looking after children aged 2+ years for at least 12 weeks in Wales | Low | Moody et al (2020) evaluated Fostering Changes by comparing the programme to a business-as-usual control group. Child behaviour and emotional wellbeing was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score measured at baseline, 3 months and 12 months. There were small but statistically significant differences in carer reported child emotional and behavioural wellbeing favouring the intervention. The time \times trial arm interaction for the SDQ Total Difficulties score was 1.90 (0.07–3.72, $p = .04$) indicating greater improvement in the intervention group over the first three months. This effect had diminished by 12 months. |



| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Briskman, 2010 | RCT | Intervention: 34 Control: 29 | Foster carers caring for a child aged 2-12 years old in England | Some concerns | <p>Briskman et al (2010) evaluated Fostering Changes by comparing the programme with a wait-list control group.</p> <p>The carer established a 'target' child considered to be exhibiting the most challenging behaviour pre-intervention. Child behavioural problems were measured using the Carer Defined Problem Scale, and child emotional and behavioural wellbeing using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score at baseline and follow-up (3 months post randomisation).</p> <p>There were significant effects for carer defined child behaviour problems (whole sample: effect size = 0.95 SD, $p = .003$; target children: effect size = .99, $p = .006$) and a small to moderate effect on emotional and behavioural wellbeing as measured by the SDQ Total Difficulties (whole sample: effect size = 0.3, $p = .027$; target children: effect size = 0.32 SD, $p = .03$).</p> |
| Chamberlain, Moreland and Reid, 1992 | RCT | Intervention: 31 Control: 41 | Children aged 4 to 7 years in foster care between 1988 and 1990 in the United States and their foster parents. Children were expected to have been in care for at least three months | Some concerns | <p>Chamberlain, Moreland and Reid (1992) evaluated Enhanced Support & Training (EST) through three group comparisons: carers who received enhanced support and training plus an extra \$70/month ($n = 31$), carers who received the extra \$70/month only ($n = 14$), and carers receiving no added support or payment ($n = 27$).</p> <p>Child behavioural problems were measured using the Parent Daily Report (PDR) at baseline and 3-months post-baseline.</p> <p>The ES&T intervention group showed a significantly larger reduction in children's daily problem behaviours when compared to the other two conditions (but p-value was not reported).</p> |



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| Farmer et al, 2010 | RCT | Intervention: 137 Control: 110 | Children and young people who lived in treatment foster care homes and their treatment parents in the United States | Some concerns | <p>Farmer (2010) evaluated Together Facing the Challenge (TFTC) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Child emotional and behavioural wellbeing was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score, the Parent Daily Report (PDR) and the Behavioural and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS). Outcomes were measured at baseline, 6-month and 12-month follow up.</p> <p>There were significant improvements in children's emotional and behavioural wellbeing for those in the intervention group. Rates of change on the PDR, SDQ and BERS were all significantly greater for the intervention group than the control group. At 6 months, these group-by-time effects were significant for all three measures (PDR $p < .01$, SDQ $p < .001$, BERS $p < .05$). At 12 months, the effect remained significant only for the PDR ($p < .01$).</p> |
| Kim and Leve, 2011; 2013 | RCT | Intervention: 48 Control: 52 | Girls aged 10 to 12 years in nonrelative or relative foster care and their foster carers in the United States | Some concerns | <p>Kim and Leve (2011; 2013) evaluated Middle School Success (MSS) by comparing the programme to a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Prosocial behaviour was measured using a subscale from the Parent Daily Report Checklist (PDR). Outcomes were measured at baseline, 6-months (T2), 12 months (T3), 24 months (T4) and 36 months (T5) post-baseline.</p> <p>There was a significant intervention effect on prosocial behaviour, based on the composite of T2 and T3 assessments, with girls in the intervention group showing higher prosocial behaviour than those in the control group ($t(97) = -2.25$, $p = .03$) with a small-moderate effect size ($d = .46$).</p> |



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| Lynch et al, 2017 | RCT | Intervention: 113 Control: 106 | Children in relative or nonrelative foster care and their carers in the United States who are entering their first year of school. | Some concerns | <p>Lynch et al (2017) evaluated Kids in Transition to School (KITS) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Internalising and externalising child behaviour were measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) which was used to calculate days free from internalising behaviour (IFD) and days free from externalising behaviour (EFD) over 12 months.</p> <p>The intervention group showed significant improvements in both internalising and externalising behaviours compared with the foster care control group (FCC), with significantly higher IFDs (M = 310.5, SD = 78.8 vs. FCC M = 284.5, SD = 101.5; p = 0.016) and significantly higher EFDs (M = 218.6, SD = 102.4 vs. FCC M = 192.0, SD = 104.6; p = 0.049).</p> |
| Price et al, 2015 | RCT | Intervention: 179 Control: 175 | Foster and kinship families in the United States caring for children between the ages of 5 and 12 years | Some concerns | <p>Price et al (2015) evaluated Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supporting (KEEP) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Child behaviour problems were measured using the Parent Daily Report Checklist (PDR) at baseline and post-intervention (18-20 weeks post-baseline).</p> <p>There was a significant group × time effect, with the intervention group showing a greater reduction in child behaviour problem scores over time than the control group for both the focal child (B = -0.73, p = .033) and the sibling (B = -0.55, p < .001).</p> |



Recommendation 3. Offer evidence-based training to support consistent foster carer-child interactions, to improve children’s development and wellbeing [Good]

| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Moody et al, 2020 | RCT | Intervention: 204 Control: 108 | Foster or kinship carers currently looking after children aged 2+ years for at least 12 weeks in Wales | Low | <p>Moody et al (2020) evaluated Fostering Changes by comparing the programme to a business-as-usual group.</p> <p>Child behaviour and emotional wellbeing was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score measured at baseline, 3 months and 12 months.</p> <p>There were small but statistically significant differences in carer reported child emotional and behavioural wellbeing favouring the intervention. The time × trial arm interaction for the SDQ Total Difficulties score was 1.90 (0.07–3.72, p = .04) indicating greater improvement in the intervention group over the first three months. This effect had diminished by 12 months.</p> |



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| Alfano et al, 2024 | RCT | Intervention: 22 Control: 23 | Foster carers and adoptive parents of children aged 2 to 5 years in the United States | Some concerns | <p>Alfano et al (2024) evaluated Sleep and Adjustment in Foster Environments for Toddlers and Preschoolers (SAFE-T) by comparing the programme with an active control condition known as ‘Sleep Education Support’ (SES).</p> <p>Child behaviour was measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist preschool form (CBCL). Children's sleep disturbances were measured using the Children's Sleep Habits Questionnaire (CSHQ). Carers also completed weekly diaries to record children's sleep patterns. Measures were assessed at baseline, post-intervention (T2) and 3 months follow-up (T3).</p> <p>The SAFE-T group scored significantly lower than the SES group on CBCL Internalizing behaviours at T2 with a large effect size ($g = -0.99$, 95% CI [-1.58, -0.37]), but no significant effects at T3.</p> <p>There was a significant and large effect on CSHQ total sleep disturbance scores favouring the SAFE-T group at both T2 ($g = -0.95$ [-1.54, -0.32]) and T3 ($g = -0.81$ [-1.39, -0.20]).</p> <p>Caregivers in the SAFE-T group reported significantly longer nighttime sleep duration compared to the active control at T2 based on medium effect size ($g = 0.66$, 95% CI [0.02, 1.27]). This was non-significant at T3.</p> |



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| Briskman, 2010 | RCT | Intervention: 34 Control: 29 | Foster carers caring for a child aged 2-12 years old in England | Some concerns | <p>Briskman et al (2010) evaluated Fostering Changes by comparing the programme with a wait-list control group.</p> <p>The carer established a 'target' child considered to be exhibiting the most challenging behaviour pre-intervention. The child's emotional and behavioural wellbeing was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score at baseline and follow-up (3 months post randomisation).</p> <p>There was a small to moderate significant effect on emotional and behavioural wellbeing as measured by the SDQ Total Difficulties score (whole sample: effect size = 0.3, $p = .027$; target children: effect size = 0.32 SD, $p = .03$).</p> |
| Farmer, 2010 | RCT | Intervention: 137 Control: 110 | Children and young people who lived in treatment foster care homes and their treatment parents in the United States | Some concerns | <p>Farmer (2010) evaluated Together Facing the Challenge (TFTC) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Child emotional and behavioural wellbeing was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Total Difficulties score, the Parent Daily Report (PDR) and the Behavioural and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS). Outcomes were measured at baseline, 6-month and 12-month follow up.</p> <p>There were significant improvements in children's emotional and behavioural wellbeing for those in the intervention group. Rates of change on the PDR, SDQ and BERS were all significantly greater for the intervention group than the control group. At 6 months, these group-by-time effects were significant for all three measures (PDR $p < .01$, SDQ $p < .001$, BERS $p < .05$). At 12 months, the effect remained significant only for the PDR ($p < .01$).</p> |



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| Lynch et al, 2017; Pears 2012, 2013, 2016; | RCT | Intervention: 113 Control: 106 | Children in relative or nonrelative foster care and their carers in the United States who are entering their first year of school | Some concerns | <p>Lynch et al (2017); and Pears (2012; 2013; 2016) evaluated Kids in Transition to School (KITS) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Early literacy skills were measured using subtests of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), the Concepts About Print Test and a caregiver rating of pre-reading skills measure developed for the study. Child self-regulation was measured using composite scores for inhibitory control, behavioural regulation and emotional regulation derived from Children’s Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ) subscales, Brief Rating Inventory of Executive Function-Preschool Version (BRIEF-P) subscales, two direct tasks (Go/No-Go; Flanker), Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) subscales and Emotion Regulation Checklist (ERC) subscales. Measures were administered at baseline (T1, beginning of summer prior to school), and T2 (end of summer prior to school entry).</p> <p>The intervention group showed statistically significant improvements in early literacy skills ($p < .05$, ES: .26) and self-regulation ($p < .05$, ES: .18).</p> <p>Internalising and externalising child behaviour were measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) which was used to calculate days free from internalising symptoms (IFD) and days free from externalising behaviour (EFD) over 12 months.</p> <p>The intervention group showed significant improvements in both internalising and externalising behaviours compared with the foster care control group (FCC), with significantly higher IFDs ($M = 310.5$, $SD = 78.8$ vs. FCC $M = 284.5$, $SD = 101.5$; $p = 0.016$) and significantly higher EFDs ($M = 218.6$, $SD = 102.4$ vs. FCC $M = 192.0$, $SD = 104.6$; $p = .049$).</p> |



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|----------|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | | | | | <p>Positive attitudes towards alcohol use was measured using an adapted version of the Monitoring the Future National Survey Questionnaire. Positive attitudes towards antisocial behaviour was measured using a 2-item measure created for this study. Self-competence was measured using the Global Self-Worth Scale of the Self-Perception Profile for Children (SPPC). Measures were administered in third grade when children were 9 years old, approximately 4 years after the intervention.</p> <p>There were significant reductions in positive attitudes towards alcohol use ($p < .05$) and positive attitudes toward antisocial behaviour ($p < .05$), as well as significant improvements in self-competence ($p < .01$) when comparing the intervention with the control group.</p> |



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|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sprang, 2009 | RCT | Intervention: 29 Control: 29 | Foster parents and children who had experienced severe maltreatment (resulting in termination of parental rights) and who had disruptions in their primary attachment relationships during their early years (0–5 years of age). Caregiver-child dyads were eligible for participation if the identified child was younger than six years of age | Some concerns | <p>Sprang (2009) evaluated Attachment and Biobehavioural Catch-up (ABC) by comparing the programme with a waitlist control group.</p> <p>Child internalising and externalising behaviour was measured using the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL) at baseline and post-intervention.</p> <p>The intervention group showed significant improvements in both internalising ($p = .05$) and externalising behaviours ($p = .01$) when compared to the control group. The treatment group also showed significantly greater improvements over time for externalising behaviours ($p = .01$), and internalising behaviours ($p = .01$) compared with the control group. This means that not only did the treatment group have better scores at follow-up, but they also improved more over time than the control group.</p> |



Recommendation 4. Provide foster carers with evidence-based self-care skills and positive child behaviour support to improve carer wellbeing [Good]

| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Moody et al, 2020 | RCT | Intervention: 204 Control: 108 | Foster or kinship carers currently looking after children aged 2+ years for at least 12 weeks in Wales | Low | Moody et al (2020) evaluated Fostering Changes by comparing the programme to a business-as-usual control group. Carers' coping strategies were measured using the Carers' Coping Strategies scale (CCS), at baseline, 3 months and 12 months. Small but statistically significant differences in carer coping strategies (CCS) over time favoured the intervention. The time × trial arm interaction was -1.81 (-3.60 to -0.02 , $p = .048$) for CCS. These effects were evident at three months but diminished by 12 months. |
| Briskman, 2010 | RCT | Intervention: 34 Control: 29 | Foster carers caring for a child aged 2-12 in England | Some concerns | Briskman et al (2010) evaluated Fostering Changes by comparing the programme with a wait-list control group. Carer coping strategies were measured using the Carer Coping Strategies (CCS) scale at baseline and follow-up (3 months post-randomisation). Parents in the intervention group showed significant improvements in carer coping strategies (CCS) when compared to the control group ($p = .011$, $ES = 0.5$). |



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| Maaskant et al, 2016; 2017 | RCT | Intervention: 47 Control: 41 | Foster parents in the Netherlands, caring for children aged 4-12 years who demonstrate severe externalising behaviour. Foster parents who reported a mean number of more than five different types of problem behaviour each day on the Parent Daily Report (PDR) during recruitment screening were eligible to participate | Some concerns | <p>Maaskant et al (2016; 2017) evaluated Parent Management Training Oregon (PMTO) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Parenting stress was measured using the Parenting Stress Index-Revised (PSI-R) at baseline and post-intervention (10 months post-baseline).</p> <p>PMTO produced reductions in parenting stress, but these reductions were consistently larger and only significant for foster mothers, not for foster fathers. Total parenting stress decreased for mothers (-0.48) and for fathers to a smaller degree (-0.23). Child-related parenting stress showed a similar pattern, with reductions for mothers (-0.34) and fathers (-0.29). The clearest effect was in parent-related parenting stress, where mothers showed a substantial reduction (-0.54) and fathers a smaller reduction (-0.14).</p> |



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| Price et al, 2015 | RCT | Intervention: 179 Control: 175 | Foster and kinship families in the United States caring for children between the ages of 5 and 12 years | Some concerns | Price et al (2015) evaluated Keeping Foster Parents Trained and Supporting (KEEP) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group. Child behaviour problems and associated parental stress were measured using the Parent Daily Report Checklist (PDR) at baseline and post-intervention (18-20 weeks post-baseline). Parents in the intervention group showed a significant reduction in stress related to the focal child over time (Group \times Time: $B = -1.73$, $p = .021$), but not for siblings ($B = -1.17$, $p = .108$). |



Recommendation 5. Provide foster carers with evidence-based positive child behaviour support in a group setting to improve placement stability and permanence [Good]

| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blair, 2018; | RCT | Intervention: 83 Control: 46 | Foster carers and children in a licensed, nonrelative foster home in the United States. Children were between 3 and 6 years old, and scored in the clinical range for externalising problems on the Eyberg Child-Behaviour Inventory (ECBI) according to foster carer ratings | Low | Blair (2018) evaluated group Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) by comparing a combined brief and extended PCIT group and a wait-list control. Permanency was measured using administrative data in the 12 months following baseline. Permanent placements were defined as adoption, guardianship or reunification. Children in the intervention group were significantly more likely to achieve permanence within 12 months post-baseline than those in the control group ($p = .030$; 95% CI [1.10, 6.31]). |



| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chamberlain , Moreland and Reid, 1992 | RCT | Intervention: 31 Control: 41 | Children aged 4 to 7 years in foster care between 1988 and 1990 in the United States and their foster parents. Children were expected to have been in care for at least three months | Some concerns | <p>Chamberlain, Moreland and Reid (1992) evaluated Enhanced Support & Training (EST) through three group comparisons: carers who received enhanced support and training plus an extra \$70/month (n = 31), carers who received the extra \$70/month only (n = 14), and carers receiving usual foster care with no added support or payment (n = 27).</p> <p>Placement stability of the child was measured using administrative data to establish the number of successful days in care. A “successful” day meant the child remained in their study foster home; days were considered “unsuccessful” if the child ran away, moved to another foster home, or was placed in residential care. This was measured over the two-year study period.</p> <p>Children in the intervention group experienced significantly more successful days in care than those in the other two study conditions (F = 3.45, p < .04).</p> |
| Kim and Leve, 2011; 2013 | RCT | Intervention: 48 Control: 52 | Girls aged 10 to 12 years in nonrelative or relative foster care and their foster carers in the United States | Some concerns | <p>Kim and Leve (2011; 2013) evaluated Middle School Success (MSS) by comparing the programme to a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>Placement stability was measured using administrative data capturing the number of placement changes over the 12 months post-baseline.</p> <p>Girls assigned to the MSS intervention experienced significantly fewer placement disruptions (p = .02) than those in the control group.</p> |



Recommendation 6. Offer foster carers evidence-based relationship-focused training to strengthen relationships with children *[Good]*

| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|-------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Briskman, 2010 | RCT | Intervention: 34 Control: 29 | Foster carers caring for a child aged 2-12 years old in England | Some concerns | <p>Briskman et al (2010) evaluated Fostering Changes by comparing the programme with a wait-list control group.</p> <p>The foster child’s attachment relationship with their foster carer was measured using the Quality of Attachment Relationships Questionnaire (QUARQ) at baseline and follow-up (3 months post-randomisation).</p> <p>The quality of attachment between the child and carer was significantly improved in the intervention group compared with the control group (ES = 0.4 SD, p = .04).</p> |
| Van Anandel, 2016 | RCT | Intervention: 65 Control: 58 | Children under 5 years old recently (in the last 8-10 weeks) placed in foster care and their foster carers in the Netherlands | Some concerns | <p>Van Anandel (2016) evaluated Foster Carer Foster Child Intervention (FFI) by comparing the programme with a business-as-usual control group.</p> <p>The quality of parent-child interactions was measured using the Emotional Availability Scales (EAS) at baseline and 6 months post-baseline.</p> <p>There was a positive effect on the quality of child–parent interaction for children in the FFI group, with significantly more improvement across most Emotional Availability Scale domains (sensitivity, structuring, nonintrusiveness, responsivity) compared with the control group (p < .05), except for the involvement domain.</p> |



Recommendation 7. Build evidence-based foster carer support networks to improve retention [*Promising*]

| Citation | Study design | Sample size | Population | Study Risk of Bias (RoB) | Primary findings |
|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ott et al, 2020 | QED | Intervention: 288 Control: 2,968 | 3,256 fostering households in the United Kingdom | Some concerns | <p>Ott et al (2020) evaluated Mockingbird Home Hub Model identifying a comparison group of families who did not receive the programme but were similar on key characteristics, comparing outcomes between the two groups.</p> <p>Carer retention was measured using administrative data from the Ofsted fostering dataset.</p> <p>There was a positive effect on foster carer retention. Households participating in Mockingbird were less likely to de-register than those who were not participating in the programme ($p < 0.001$) between 2016/17 and 2018/19.</p> |



Evidence underpinning principles

Key principle 1: Create a coordinated network of support for foster families

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1.1 Parents and carers found interventions that address multiple areas of their lives and help to provide a network around the child useful. | This finding was informed by 7 qualitative studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grollman et al., 2020• Herbert & Wookey, 2007• McDermid et al., 2016• Midgley et al., 2019• Ott et al., 2020• Knibbs et al., 2016• Rees & Handley, 2022 | Low: This finding was graded as low confidence due to concerns about methodological limitations, limited relevance of the available data, and issues with coherence across the contributing studies. |



Key principle 2: Support should be provided by practitioners who are warm, passionate and empathetic, and who approach foster carers as equal partners.

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2.1 Facilitator warmth and genuine passion are vital to building trusting relationships, fostering engagement, and making participants feel valued. | This finding was informed by 9 qualitative studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cameron et al., 2020• Channon et al., 2020• Herbert & Wookey 2007• Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025• Knibbs et al., 2016• Rees & Handley, 2022• Midgley et al., 2019• Midgley et al., 2021• Ott et al., 2020 | High: This finding was graded as high confidence because of the richness of the data, and there were only moderate concerns regarding methodological limitations. |



Key principle 3: Offer facilitated peer support, as it is valued by foster carers as being important for their emotional wellbeing.

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3.1 Facilitated peer support provides parents and carers with a much-needed space for emotional support, reciprocal learning, and feeling heard and seen. | This finding was informed by 15 qualitative studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bywater et al., 2011;• Cameron et al., 2020;• Channon et al., 2020• Grollman et al., 2020• Herbert & Wookey, 2007• Katangwe-Chigamba, et al., 2025• Knibbs et al., 2016• Madigan, Paton, & Mackett, 2017• McDermid et al., 2016• Midgley et al., 2019• Midgley et al., 2021• Oliveira et al., 2022• Ott et al., 2020• Redfern et al., 2023• Rees & Handley, 2022 | High: This finding was graded as high confidence because of the richness of the data, and there were only moderate concerns regarding methodological limitations. |



Key principle 4: Support should include a focus on carers' needs, enabling them to provide children with stable, loving care.

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4.1 Providing a space to focus on parent and carer needs was welcomed and seen as useful. | This finding was informed by 10 qualitative studies <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grollman et al., 2020• Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025• Knibbs et al., 2016• Madigan, Paton, & Mackett, 2017• McDermid et al., 2016• Midgley et al., 2019• Midgley et al., 2021• Oliveira et al., 2022; Ott et al., 2020• Rees & Handley, 2022 | High: This finding was graded as high confidence because of the richness of the data, and there were only moderate concerns regarding methodological limitations. |
| 4.2 Parents and caregivers reported benefits to understanding the need for self-care. | This finding was informed by 7 qualitative studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cameron et al., 2020• Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025• Knibbs et al., 2016• Madigan, Paton, & Mackett, 2017• Midgley et al., 2019• Midgley et al., 2021• Rees & Handley, 2022 | Moderate: This finding was graded as moderate confidence because of the data relevance and coherence. However, there were concerns about methodological limitations and richness of detail in the studies included. |



Key principle 5: Prioritise support that strengthens foster carers’ capacity to understand and respond sensitively to a child in their care.

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>5.1 Parents and caregivers reported benefits related to improvements in their ability to slow down, reflect, and regulate their emotions before responding to children.</p> | <p>This finding was informed by 10 qualitative studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cameron et al., 2020 • Channon et al., 2020 • Herbert & Wookey 2007 • Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025 • Knibbs et al., 2016 • Madigan, Paton, & Mackett, 2017 • Midgley et al., 2019 • Midgley et al., 2021 • Oliveria et al., 2022 • Rees & Handley 2022 | <p>High: This finding was graded as high confidence because of the richness of the data, and there were only moderate concerns regarding methodological limitations.</p> |
| <p>5.2 Parents and caregivers identified increased understanding of, empathy for, and attunement to the child’s needs as a key benefit, contributing to more responsive and patient caregiving.</p> | <p>This finding was informed by 10 qualitative studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cameron et al., 2020 • Channon et al., 2020 • Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025 • Knibbs et al., 2016 • Luke et al., 2025 • Madigan, Paton, & Mackett, 2017 • Midgley et al., 2019 • Midgley et al., 2021 • Oliveria et al., 2022 • Rees & Handley 2022 | <p>High: This finding was graded as high confidence because of the richness of the data, and there were only moderate concerns regarding methodological limitations.</p> |



Key principle 6: Support should be structured but allow for flexibility and tailoring to individual needs.

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6.1 Parents and carers value interventions that are structured but have room for flexibility, enabling facilitators to be responsive to individual needs. | This finding was informed by 12 qualitative studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bywater et al., 2011• Cameron et al., 2020• Channon et al., 2020• Connolly et al., 2021• Katangwe-Chigamba, et al., 2025• Knibbs et al., 2016• McDermid et al., 2016• Midgley et al., 2019• Midgley et al., 2021• Oliveira et al., 2022• Ott et al., 2020• Rees & Handley, 2022 | High: This finding was graded as high confidence because of the richness of the data, and there were only moderate concerns regarding methodological limitations. |



Key principle 7: Help foster carers engage confidently with support by using a strengths-based, inclusive approach.

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7.1 Clear communication of the intervention aims and activities to referrers and participants, alongside a strengths-based approach to recruitment, is key to recruiting appropriate participants. | <p>This finding was informed by 7 qualitative studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channon et al., 2020 • Luke et al., 2025 • McDermid et al., 2016 • Moody et al., 2021 • Oliveria et al., 2022 • Ott et al., 2020 • Rees & Handley, 2022 | Moderate: This finding was graded as moderate confidence because of the data relevance and coherence. However, there were concerns about methodological limitations and richness of detail in the studies included. |
| 7.2 Social worker and wider system support for an intervention tends to encourage attendance. | <p>This finding was informed by 7 qualitative studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channon et al., 2020 • Knibbs et al., 2016 • Luke et al., 2025 • McDermid et al., 2022 • Oliveria et al., 2022 • Ott et al., 2020 • Rees & Handley, 2022 | Moderate: This finding was graded as moderate confidence because of the data relevance and coherence. However, there were concerns about methodological limitations and richness of detail in the studies included. |
| 7.3 The assumption that primary caregivers are female can be a barrier to male caregivers, single women, and same-sex couples. | <p>This finding was informed by 2 qualitative studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025 • Rees & Handley, 2022 | High: This finding was graded as high confidence because of the richness of the data, and there were only moderate concerns regarding methodological limitations. |



| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7.4 Parents and carers have limited time; interventions need to be perceived as relevant and effective to maintain engagement | <p>This finding was informed by 11 qualitative studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bywater et al., 2011 • Cameron et al., 2020 • Channon et al., 2020 • Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025 • Knibbs et al., 2016 • Madigan, Paton, & Mackett, 2017 • Midgley et al., 2019 • Ott et al., 2020 • Oliveria et al., 2022 • Redfern et al., 2023 • Rees & Handley, 2022 | Moderate: This finding was graded as moderate confidence because of the data relevance and coherence. However, there were concerns about methodological limitations and richness of detail in the studies included. |

Key principle 8: Provide foster carers with opportunities to put theory into practice.

| Systematic review finding | Supporting studies | Confidence in finding (CERQual) |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8.1 Parents and carers value learning strategies that integrate theory and practice. | <p>This finding was informed by 7 qualitative studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channon et al., 2020 • Katangwe-Chigamba et al., 2025 • Knibbs et al., 2016 • Herbert & Wookey, 2007 • McDermid et al., 2022 • Midgley et al., 2019 • Rees & Handley 2022 | Moderate: This finding was graded as moderate confidence because of the data relevance and coherence. However, there were concerns about methodological limitations and richness of detail in the studies included. |



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