Assessing Prospective Foster Parents

Our objective is to provide high quality, safe and child focused foster placements for children according to local need.

This procedure sets out how Channels and Choices fostering agency enacts the regulatory framework for the assessment of foster parents in England to meet the above objective.

This procedure forms part of Channels and Choices Management system.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Procedure Owner: |  |
| Approved by: |  |
| Date approved: |  |  |
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| Version No: |  |
| AssociatedPolicy and supporting documents: | Health & Safety Checklist |
| Health & Safety Procedure |
| Risk Assessment & Safer Caring Procedure |
| DBS Procedure |
|  |

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# Procedure Details

Our marketing approach and analysis of need enables us to target recruitment activity to meet a wide and comprehensive range of needs of children for which we aim to attract and recruit a diverse range of Foster Parents. We are very happy to assess applicants with a diverse range of social characteristics and who live in a range of diverse social circumstances so that we have foster parents to represent a broad range of the community and meet the full range of needs of children within the community. However, for any application in which a couple are living together as partners or living apart but with both planning to provide care to a child in care we will always assess this as a joint application in which both partners must be assessed as suitable to become foster parents.

We will assess those applicants that have a realistic chance of becoming foster parents and meeting that need. On occasion, we may not be able to accept an application, but we will always talk this through with applicants when we do not accept an application form and will confirm that in writing.

Foster parenting is a professional role to nurture and support children who are in public care to achieve the best possible life outcomes. Fostering is a critical role, which allows individuals to care for other people’s children in their own home full time, and therefore the process must be robust in its scrutiny of those people wishing to provide care for children.

No one has the right to be a foster parent, and not everyone has the aptitude or capacity to provide foster care in their home. Therefore, the assessment of prospective foster parents is a process, which affords the opportunity to consider all the evidence available in a fair and transparent manner, to make a decision as to whether or not the fostering household is suitable to provide safe nurturing care to children in care.

It is important to see foster parent recruitment and assessment alongside foster parent retention and to see the stability of the placements of children as integrated measurable processes. These processes are underpinned by thorough preparation, training and good support and supervision to ensure a robust, efficient and child centered team of foster parents. It is by ensuring that foster parents are encouraged and supported throughout their fostering journey, from making an enquiry through to assessment and hopefully many years of fostering that the best support will be provided to the children who need a loving fostering family to care for them.

# Integrated working within Assessment



# The Enquiry Process

We aim to ensure that all enquirers are provided with a friendly, courteous and efficient service by specialist staff who are trained in the role of recruiting Foster Parents. Management oversight of the recruitment service is robust to ensure that all enquiries are treated fairly and in a timely manner.

Enquiries go to business support enquiry team and they respond to the enquiries received. Enquiries are made to the team through several different routes. These include directly from the appropriate agency website, phone calls, emails and a live web chat facility. The enquirer will go through an initial screening process to establish whether a further and more detailed discussion or visit would be appropriate. If at any point, the service decides that it is not able to progress with an enquiry the enquirer will be advised of the reasons.

Should the business support receiving the enquiry and enquirer determine that they would both like to proceed, then the officer will open an enquiry on CHARMS, book the initial visit and pass the details to a Recruitment and Placement Manager who will then complete an initial home visit. This visit is arranged at a time to suit the enquirer and other members of the family who need to be present. The meeting is confirmed to the enquirer via email/letter.

In all cases the initial home visit will be completed at the enquirer’s home that is intended to be used for fostering.

The initial visit allows the agency’s Placement and Recruitment Manager to see the family in their own environment, view the property, the make-up of the home, take into consideration any health and safety requirements that may need to be addressed, and answer any questions the enquirer has.

The initial home visit will enable the enquirer to discuss fostering for the agency and the application, assessment, training, and panel and approval process. Following the visit an ‘Initial Home Visit Report’ will be completed which will include any recommendations around the viability of an assessment and give an early indication of key areas of strength and concerns/focus.

If the Placement and Recruitment Manager following the visit considers that the enquirer is suitable to proceed into assessment, they will ask the enquirer to complete the application form. Once an application form is received by the agency and an Initial Home Visit report has been completed these documents are passed to the agency’s Registered Manager. They then consider the application form and Home Visit Report, seek clarification or further information where needed and then make a decision to accept the application or otherwise.

This decision should be taken without delay and within 7 days if further information is required to inform the decision.

If the decision is taken to accept an application, the decision must be made to conduct the assessment with Stage 1 and 2 running concurrently or to begin Stage 1 of the assessment first.

# Enquiry through to Application Stage - FLOWCHART

Web enquiry

Telephone

enquiry

Live web chat

enquiry

All enquiries are considered by a business support

who completes a screening process, using Initial Enquiry Form

Enquiry does not meet

criteria. Advice offered. **End of process**

Enquiry meets basic criteria. Home Visit

booked, confirmed with enquirer by email

**Enquiry does not meet criteria.**

Advice offered.

**End of process**

Home visit to enquirer and Initial Home Visit Report

completed

**.**

If application not accepted,

the process can be ended after discussion/agreement between the Recruitment Manager and the Registered Manager

**Inquiry meets the criteria.**

Application form provided and enquirer is invited to apply.

Business support offer help and follow up with the enquirer.

Application received, checked by the Register Manager alongside the IV report, and if accepted the enquirer moves into the assessment process.

Assessment

Email enquiry

#

# The Assessment Process

### Application form received and accepted

In England NMS 14.4 requires that the agency fostering panel make its recommendation on suitability to foster within “8 months of receipt of the prospective Foster parent(s)

application to be assessed”. All information relating to the applicant and third parties obtained throughout the recruitment and assessment process is handled, processed and stored in line with GDPR principles and in compliance with the agency Data Protection Policy.

Assessments are undertaken by qualified and suitably experienced social workers.1 These are often independent social workers (referred to as Independent Assessing Social Workers contracted to undertake individual assessments on a self-employed basis.

Each ISW must have their own Self-Employed file, which contains all documentation obtained as part of the safer recruitment process and ongoing practice monitoring and development. Human Resources are responsible for the update and review of the self-employed contractor contracts and ensuring continued compliance with necessary checks and registrations.

The Recruitment Managers is responsible for the shortlisting, interview, induction and management of ISWs. They provide structured consultative guidance and support to the ASWs and quality assure their work.

Applicants and their ISW’s, recruitment manager and Business Support Officers who provide end to end administrative support to each assessment are required to sign an assessment agreement for each assessment, the terms of which they agree to adhere to throughout the duration of the assessment.

The assessment thread from Initial Visit through to report is as follows:

**Initial Visit Allocation ** **Three Ways** **Midway Review ** **Report**

# Structure of Assessments

The assessment structure is made up of two parts, Stage 1 through a range of verifiable checks and Stage 2 through a home study assessment.

# Assessing Foster Parents – Decision made to run stages 1 and 2 concurrently:

* Regulations in **England and Wales** allow Stage 1 and 2 to be commenced at the same time, and this is usually what Channels and Choices fostering agency will do unless there are specific reasons to seek Stage 1 checks or a particular Stage 1 check prior to commencing Stage 2.

**Stage 1 checks in England and Wales are:**

* the applicant’s full name, address and date of birth;
* details of the applicant’s health, supported by a medical report;
* particulars of other adult household members;
* particulars of children in the applicant’s family (whether or not they are members of the household) and any other children in the household;
* particulars of the household’s accommodation;
* the outcome of any request or application made by the applicant, or any member of the applicant’s household, to foster or adopt children or for registration as an early or later years provider under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006, including particulars of any previous approval or refusal of approval;
* the name and address of any fostering service that the applicant has been an approved foster parent for in the preceding 12 months;
* names and addresses of two persons who will provide personal references for the applicant;
* in relation to the applicant and each member of their household aged 18 or over, an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service Certificate (DBS/Access NI);
* details of any current and any previous marriage, civil partnership or similar relationship.
* consult the local authority/trust in whose area the applicant lives, if this is different to the fostering service
* interview at least two personal referees and prepare written reports of the interviews; or, if the person has been an approved foster parent for another fostering service in the preceding twelve months, request a written reference from that fostering service. If an applicant has been a foster parent in the previous 12 months, and a written reference from their previous fostering service is obtained, there is no requirement to also interview personal referees. However, the fostering service can seek verbal and/or written references from personal referees, in addition to the fostering service’s reference, if they choose to do so. If the previous fostering service does not provide a reference, for whatever reason, interviews with two personal referees must be conducted.

# Assessing Foster Parents – stages 1 and 2 concurrently – **FLOWCHART**

**The Registered Manager**

* Confirms decision to begin assessment at Stage 1 & 2 after reviewing the Initial Visits Report**,** or the

three ways meeting for transferred foster carers.

* Sets dates for **Mid-point review / Assessment QA** and **panel** with the responsible business support.
* Allocates ISW setting out terms for assessment.

**Responsible Business Support:**

* Generates forms and letters as required and updates the system.
* Commences Checks process and books Applicant onto the assessment preparation training.
* Sets up the Applicant on the E-Learning system and sends the Pre-Panel required training to
* the applicant.

**The Registered Manager and Responsible Business Support** regularly review status of all checks and agree additional actions, including supplementary checks, as required.

RBS updates system, uploads copies of checks (if required) upon receipt and advises RM of checks received.

The RM and ADM decide that information disclosed via Stage 1 checks indicates the Applicant is not suitable and the assessment should not proceed.

Within 10 working days of receipt of final ‘statutory’ check letter from ADM is sent to

applicants advising that Stage 1 of the assessment process has been completed satisfactorily

ADM informs Applicant in writing of decision not to proceed, this must be within 10 working days of receipt of the last Stage 1 check. Include information about complaints process.

Recruitment Manager, RM and ISW communicate through structured mid- point review and pre-panel consultation (if needed) but within other regular discussions as appropriate about progress of assessment and content of checks.

ISW alerts RM to any significant issues identified during their assessment at the earliest opportunity.

Mid-point review documented by RBS, approved by the RM and uploaded to Applicant record.

Concerns about the Applicant’s suitability arise and decision made that the assessment should not continue

ISW is able to make a positive recommendation regarding an applicant’s suitability to foster.

Full assessment is completed

**For all applications whereby an ADM decision has not been confirmed within 10 working days of the receipt of the last**

**‘Statutory check’ or is not based on Stage 1 information**

Applicants must be notified of the concerns and informed of their options. Unless applicants formally withdraw from the assessment

A ‘Brief Report’ or a full report will be written by the ISW and presented to the fostering panel.

ISW submits completed Form F Assessment and all accompanying documentation by the agreed deadline

RM quality assures the Form F Assessment report.

If RM identifies that the assessment (or associated documentation) requires further input then they will notify the ISW and only if necessary set revised timescales for submission of that information.

The Agency Decision Maker will make a Qualifying Determination (QD) on consideration of all available documentation and panel minutes and Applicants must be made aware that they may seek that the decision of the ADM be reviewed independently by the Independent Reviewing Mechanism

RM alerts RBS that Form F Assessment and associated

documentation is ‘Panel Ready’.

RBS notifies the Panel Chair and Members that the Assessment is ready on CHARMS for their consideration.

If the Applicant identifies a specific area of process they feel was followed inappropriately they can make a complaint, however a complaint may only be about the process and not the decision. Complaint’s guide must be provided with a Stage 1 assessment termination letter.

RBS sends / makes available a copy of the completed Form F assessment report to the Applicant for their consideration, approval and signature.

**The panel will consider the recommendation of the ISW in making its own recommendation to the ADM. The ADM then makes a decision to approve the applicant(s) or makes a Qualifying Determination (QD) indicating unable to approve.**

# Assessing Foster Parents – Decision made to run Stage 1 and Stage 2 Consecutively

The decision to proceed with Stage 1 before Stage 2 occurs where the agency considers it is prudent to see the return of a Stage 1 check prior to commencing a Stage 2 assessment, for example for new applicants and where there is a significant chance that a Stage 1 check may prevent an Applicant from fostering. The process above would remain the same; however, the allocation of the ISW and start of home study would not usually be undertaken until the agency decides to move to Stage 2. This should be once the check(s) that is causing potential concern is returned rather than once all Stage 1 checks are returned and satisfied. It is important to remember that the 8-month regulatory requirement begins from the time of the application being received.

Regulation 26(1B) and (1C) provide that at any point during stage 1 of the assessment process, if the fostering service’s decision maker decides that the applicant is not suitable to foster, they must write to the applicant informing them of this decision and give full reasons for it. At the latest, the decision about whether or not the applicant has successfully completed stage 1 must be reached, and the applicant informed, within 10 working days of all the stage 1 information (regulation 26(1A)) being received. If, within this timeframe, it is decided not to continue with an assessment because of information collected as part of stage 1, the applicant must be informed that they can complain via the fostering service’s complaints process if they are unhappy with the way in which their case has been handled. The complaints process should address whether or not the applicant’s case has been handled in a reasonable way, rather than the question of the applicant’s suitability to foster.

# Home Study Assessment/Form F Assessment

Home Study Assessment (Stage 2). When undertaking the home study assessment and in preparing applicants for the fostering role, the Assessing Social Worker will consider the following key areas:

* Safeguarding children’s physical, mental and emotional welfare
* Protecting and keeping children safe from harm in relation to absences / missing from placement and self-protection skills and awareness of child exploitation in all its forms including child sexual exploitation (CSE) and all forms of criminal exploitation.
* Providing a high-quality standard of care
* Providing a safe, healthy and nurturing environment
* Having a child-centered approach
* Recognising and addressing children’s needs in terms of gender, religion, ethnic origin, language, culture, disability and sexuality
* Promoting children’s health and educational achievement, self-esteem and self- awareness
* Providing stability in the lives of children to enable them to achieve their full potential
* Working closely with children’s family and encouraging contact with family and friends (where appropriate)
* Providing support and guidance, including coaching in general life skills, to young people preparing to leave care
* Working as part of a team of professionals
* Participating in learning and development (including completion of TSD standards as appropriate) and taking up opportunities for continued personal and professional development
* Engaging in peer support and support groups
* Full engagement in group social events with the focus on improving the quality of life for children
* Achieving positive outcomes for children, including encouraging them to recognise and take advantage of opportunities

#### Within the assessment process, Applicants are required to:

* Actively participate in the assessment process and preparation of the assessment report.
* Provide support to follow up ‘checks’ if issues arise e.g. providing alternative contact details for referees.
* Attend and fully engage in Pre-Approval Preparation Assessment Training, and E-learning.
* Work closely with the ISW throughout the assessment including completing the worksheet, focusing on key issues relevant to the fostering role. This is to ensure that all foster parents who are recruited are appropriately prepared to work with support and meet the challenges of the role.
* Read the non-confidential sections of the assessment report prior to presentation to the Fostering Panel, add any information or clarification they feel would be helpful and add their signature(s) to confirm their approval.

***Note: applicants will not be able to see documentation from third party sources where consent from the information providers has not been given.***

Note that an applicant may seek access to their file at any time through a Subject Access Request (SAR) but this is unlikely to lead to information provided in confidence by third party sources being released to them without the agreement of the relevant third party source(s).

Applicants are invited to attend and be heard at the Fostering Panel in person accompanied by their ISW and by a supporter if they so wish. The purpose of the panel is to clarify any issues raised by the assessment report and for Fostering Panel members to satisfy themselves that the Agency’s standards have been met.

Applicants must be fully informed about all aspects and requirements of the assessment processes from the outset within an introductory letter from an Agency Decision Maker. Applicants are fully supported to meet those requirements if they are able to do so throughout the duration of their assessment, by both their ISW and the RBS.

All assessments should be completed and presented to the Fostering Panel within the date specified on the Assignment Confirmation Note (Commissioning letter). It is important that assessments are allocated to an ISW without delay. Regulations stipulate that assessments must be completed within 8 months; this period is measured from the point an application is received to the fostering panel making a recommendation to the Agency Decision Maker (ADM) in respect of the suitability of the applicant to be approved as a foster parent by the agency. In exceptional circumstances if the 8-month timescale has not been achieved the reasons must be recorded within the assessment report and within the panel minutes.

The RM will oversee the progress of the assessment with the ISW. The ‘mid-point’ review meeting and pre-panel consultation (if needed) between the Recruitment Manager, RM and ISW will examine the evidence and analysis gathered to date and agree further enquiries or assessment activities required to ensure the final report covers any ‘new’ information received during the assessment process. Communication and review should continue throughout the assessment with ongoing discussion as necessary in addition to the process of structured consultation.

The assessment report will always contain the ISW’s final recommendation regarding the Applicant’s suitability to be a Foster Parent(s), the suggested terms of approval and support and learning and development needs. Applicants are provided with and asked to sign all non-confidential sections of the Form F assessment report.

If the Applicant provides any factual corrections or comments, then these must be reviewed by the RM and the ISW and any appropriate corrective action taken. Upon completion, a copy of the amended Form F assessment report is sent to the Applicant asking that they review and sign Section E where appropriate and return it.

The RM has the final responsibility for the quality assurance of all assessments. RM must ensure that all assessments are of the highest standard, compliant with the Fostering Services/looked after children Regulations, National Minimum Standards and Health & Social Care Standards as well as agency procedures and best practice requirements.

# Professional Development Plan (PDP)

The ISW will complete a Professional Development Plan (PDP) for each Applicant. This, alongside the assessment homework set to applicants by the assessor completed by applicants as a full and detailed preparatory tool used throughout the assessment identifies areas of strength, but also any gaps in learning and development and includes a plan as to how those gaps can be addressed by the Applicant and the agency during the first 12 months of approval.

Once approved, the Professional Development Plan will form the basis of supervision sessions between the Foster Parents and the SSW and will determine future learning and development needs.

The PDP will be regularly reviewed and updated by the SSW to reflect the Foster Parent’s development and also be reviewed and updated as part of the annual Foster Parent review process.

# Pre-Approval Preparation and Assessment Training

A pre-approval preparation and assessment training course is provided for all Applicants. The primary focus is to prepare Applicants for fostering, and to ensure they receive crucial information that will enable them to understand the complex needs of many ‘looked after’ children arising from previous experiences and to explore strategies to work with support to meet those needs and provide a positive loving family home.

Applicants are observed throughout the course and course facilitators produce a short, written report upon completion that details observations on the Applicant’s engagement, contribution, attitude and any concerns that may have arisen. ***The applicant(s) must be***

***made aware that they will be observed as part of this training and that a short report will be generated as a result. Applicants* must be made aware verbally by the trainers of any significant issues that they will identify in their short report.** This report is shared with the RM, ISW and the Applicant. The ISW considers the content of the short report in the context of the assessment and the report is also shared with the Fostering Panel.

The Applicant must make themselves available to attend the training. If it is a joint application, then (unless the applicants are experienced foster parents in which case attendance may be desirable but discretionary) both applicants should attend the full course. There may be some circumstances in which an applicant can bring a supporter to the training e.g. a non-resident partner or an adult household member who will have regular contact with any child placed with the applicant. However, this should be discussed with the trainers in advance.

Alongside the above training, applicants are also required to complete the following E-learning courses prior to attending panel:

WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) Safeguarding Level 1

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Attachment

# Health and Safety Assessment

All Applicants require a robust and thorough assessment of their home, any garden and any vehicle to ensure that the home environment is safe from hazards, is gas safe and is suitable in all respects as a home for a ‘looked after child’ to live in.

The assessment will consider fire safety and will address any potential risk areas including being near to water, any firearms, any caravan/mobile home, small holding, Quad bike etc. This process ensures that any potential hazards are identified early and safety measures agreed between the Applicant and ISW.

The health and Safety Assessment and safer caring discussions should evidence that the home will provide a safe and appropriate environment for a ‘looked after’ child and that

bedroom and sleeping arrangements are specific to the ages, and developmental stage of a child. A robust assessment of the applicant(s) will highlight their experience and skills to care for children of the range of ages and needs for which approval may be recommended. Where applicants may be approved to care for babies and young infants it is important that

the assessment will ensure that applicants understand and implement a safer sleeping environment for babies and infants in line with NHS guidance and Safer Sleeping procedures.

In line with the Health and Safety checklist and requirements within the foster parent agreement, applicants will be required to provide evidence of appropriate insurance cover for home, car, travel and third party liability.

# Household Safer Caring Plan

Safer caring practices are fully explored within the assessment process and during the preparatory training. Applicants must produce their first Household Safer Caring Plan during their assessment. It will be based on a template but should be personalised to the circumstances of each applicant household as appropriate. It should be produced in consultation with, and agreed by, all members of the household. The ISW will guide the Applicant and approve the plan.

The household safer caring plan should confirm that proposed bedroom and sleeping arrangements are appropriate for all children and that applicants who may care for young children understand safer sleeping expectations for babies and young infants.

**Support Persons** (**Friends or Family Members)**

Each application should include a nominated support person who will be able to step in and provide support, offer a break as and when required and will be a nominated key person

within the applicant’s support network.

A professional assessment of a nominated support person should include all adult household members if a child will stay at the support person’s home. The assessment,

undertaken by the Independent Social Worker is a valuable contribution to the overall assessment and to an understanding of the strength of the applicant’s support network.

The Support Person Assessment is to be approved and signed by the ISW and the RM.

# Welcome Booklet / Foster Parent Profile(s)

All applicants must have a Profile / Welcome Book, which is used to share with children who may be placed and to share with the LA/Trust. The ISW should introduce the purpose of these documents and support the Applicant to complete.

It is important that sufficient information be given to a child ahead of their placement with the Foster Parent(s). It is intended to provide some information about who lives in the household, their home, the bedroom available for the child, the location and any routines and activities they are involved in. It is hoped that this will support any introductions and allay some initial fears for the child. The Applicant should be encouraged to be creative and produce something warm, engaging and ‘child friendly’.

# Assessing approved or previously approved Foster Parents

There are differing scenarios that present themselves within fostering as applicants seek to join a new fostering agency that necessitate a (new) fostering assessment being undertaken of Applicants who are currently or have previously been approved as Foster Parents:

* Applicant who has been an approved Foster Parent with another agency during last 12 months
* Applicant who has been an approved Foster Parent with other agency but more than 12 months ago

The matrix below sets out the checks, references and requirements to be undertaken in such situations.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Checks, references, requirements** | **Applicant who has been an approved Foster Parent during last 12 months for a different agency.** | **Applicant who has been an approved Foster Parent but more than 12 months ago** |
| **DBS / Access NI** | Yes | Yes |
| **Medicals** | Yes | Yes |
| **Current Fostering****agency reference** | Yes | Yes (last foster agency they were approved for) |
| **Previous fostering / adoption /Child****minding reference** | Yes – unless previous check available from file and nochanges | Yes – unless previous check available from file and no changes |
| **Overseas check** | Yes – unless previous checkavailable from file and no changes | Yes – unless previous check available from file and no changes |
| **LA residency** | Yes | Yes |
| **Publicly Accessible****Internet check** | Yes | Yes |
| **Ex-partner reference** | Yes – unless previous checkavailable from file and no changes | Yes – unless previous check available from file and no changes |
| **2 personal references** | No – if reference provided by current or recent fostering agency but contact to ask if anything new they wish to share and there is discretion tointerview if necessary | Yes |
| **Family reference** | No – if reference provided by current or recent fostering agency but contact to ask if anything new they wish toshare | Yes |
| **Education reference** | Yes | Yes |
| **Current employer** | Yes | Yes |
| **Previous employer (working with children or vulnerable adults)** | No – if reference provided by current or recent fostering agency | Yes – unless previous check available from file |
| **Landlord consent** | Yes | Yes |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Checks, references, requirements** | **Applicant who has been an approved Foster Parent during last 12 months for a different agency.** | **Applicant who has been an approved Foster Parent but more than 12 months ago** |
| **Finance check** | Yes | Yes |
| **Armed Forces (as required)** | Yes – unless previous checkavailable from file and no changes | Yes – unless previous check available from file and no changes |
| **Preparatory training attendance Workbook****Feedback report** | Discretionary | Discretionary |
| **FC TSDS Portfolio** | No if already completed and signed to evidence – otherwise complete within first yearfollowing approval | No if already completed and signed to evidence – otherwise complete within first year following approval |
| **PDP** | Yes | Yes |
| **Household Safer****Caring Plan** | Yes | Yes |
| **Health and Safety HH****assessment** | Yes | Yes |
| **Pets****Assessment** | Yes | Yes |
| **Support person risk****assessment/ FFMRC accreditation form** | Yes | Yes |
| **Welcome booklet** | Yes | Yes |
| **Foster Parent Profile** | Yes | Yes |

# Re-Assessment of existing Foster Parents with a change of Registration

* If the applicants are currently fostering or have been registered as foster parents within the last 12 months, then if the current or recent fostering agency provides a written reference there is no requirement to either obtain written references from nor to interview personal referees, though a decision may be taken to do so.

# Protocol of Movement of Foster Parents between Fostering Agencies

Approved Foster Parents have the freedom to apply to change the fostering agency that holds their approval if they so wish. [The Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol](https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/recruitment-and-retention/transfer-protocols) was created to lay out ‘good practice’ guidelines that should be followed when a Foster Parent wishes to transfer between agencies. This was developed in a partnership between The Fostering Network and the joint forum of independent fostering providers, with the support of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services. Channels and Choices fostering agency has adopted the protocol as best practice.

The protocol outlines different procedures for the transfer of Foster Parents between agencies depending on whether there are children in placement.

Channels and Choices Fostering Agency will follow the steps below:

1. Application form completed with consent.
2. Foster carers will request their form F from the existing agency.
3. Allocated ISW will read Form F
4. ISW will complete “File Read” using the Channels and Choices template.
5. **Three way meeting** (recruitment manager, Fostering Manager, and ISW) will complete the check list to decide what checks/information are satisfactory and will be used to complete Channels and Choices assessment process and what checks/information will be repeated.
6. Assessment timetable will be agreed with the ISW.

# Documentation, Forms and Stages of the Enquiry and Assessment

### Process – OVERVIEW

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Specific stages of process** | **Responsibility** | **Notes** |
| **1. Initial Enquiry/Initial visit booking** | Business Support | All enquiries to be directed to the business support team. If screening is positive for a home visit they then book the IV and send the details to the Recruitment Manager to complete the visit.  |
| **2. Home Visit** | Recruitment manager | If home visit is positive, an application is invited from the enquirer. The Recruitment Manager complete the report with the recommendations and then pass it to the RM for approval.  |
| **4. Welcome letter and allocation** | Business Support | Business support to upload the IV report to CHARMS, and send a Welcome Letter sent to applicant |
| RMRecruitment Manager  | Takes a decision whether to accept the application and if it is accepted at Stage 1 and 2 or initially at Stage 1 only.When the Home Study begins, (Assessment is accepted at Stage 2) the Recruitment Manager selects an ISW to undertake the Home Study. |

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| **Specific stages of process** | **Responsibility** | **Notes** |
|  | Recruitment Manager | Completes a Commissioning letter to set out terms of assessment and highlights areas of focus within assessment as: potential contra-indicators, Issues for early focus and any other issues pertaining to the assessment. This sets out the Mid-Point Review date, pre-panel consultation date (if needed), report submission date and planned panel date and is copied to the RM and the Business Support. |
| **Assessment Begins (see separate table below of checks/references)** |
| **5. Outcome of Stage 1 Assessment****(England and Wales only)** | RM and ADM | Upon completion of Stage 1 (or when the RM and ADM consider there is sufficient information to continue with or proceed to Stage 2) the ADM must confirm that decision in writing for the applicant.  |
| ADM | If the ADM takes the decision to terminate the assessment under Stage 1 criteria, he/she must write to the Applicant within 10 days of receipt of **all** Stage 1 checks to confirm giving reasons for that decision while taking account of data protection responsibilities to any third-party sources who have provided informationin confidence.  |

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| **Specific stages of process** | **Responsibility** | **Notes** |
| **6. Ending the Assessment (Non Stage 1 ends of Assessment in England and Wales)** | ISWBusiness support | If the Applicant is considered to be unsuitable to foster due to information obtained within Stage 2 of the assessment (or more than 10 days have elapsed since the return of the final Stage 1 check) then the Applicant must be informed of the reasons and advised that a Brief Report or a full report will be compiled and scheduled for consideration at the Fostering Panel.The Brief report (or full report) will be written by the ISW and submitted for ‘approval’ by the RM for presentation at a Fostering Panel meeting.Business Support sends the brief report (or full report) along with a covering letter to the Applicant asking for them to review, provide any comments and sign and return with a deadline of 10 days for return. The letter also acts as a formal invitation to the Fostering Panel meeting.If the Applicant raises any issues with the accuracy of factual content of the report or is unwilling to sign, then this will be managed by the RM. |
| **7. Quality assurance of Form F** | RM | Quality assurance of Form F must be completed within 2 weeks of receipt of documentation. If documentation is not completed to the required standard, then feedback and consultation is provided to the ISW. Corrective action and any unavoidable variation of timescales must be agreed and any change to Panel date is agreed.Any change to the planned panel date is communicated verbally to the Applicant by the ISW and Business support. Corrective action is completed as required and documentation resubmitted by the ISW and business support is informed. |

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| **Specific stages of process** | **Responsibility** | **Notes** |
| **8. Health and Safety Assessments** | ISW | All Health and Safety assessments to be completed by ISW during Form-F assessment. |
| **9. Training and Development****for Applicant** | ISW | Set out in PDP |
| **10. Welcome booklet / Profile(S)** | Applicant/ISW | To be prepared by applicants with Independent Assessing Social Worker |
| **11. Applicant Form F Agreement** | Applicant / Business Support | The final version (minus confidential sections) of the Form F report must be made available to the Applicant for review and comment. Comments should be provided, and the Section E signed. If any corrections are required, then these should be reviewed by the RM and if unavoidable a new deadline for completion and return set |
| **12. Applicant Withdrawal from Assessment** | Applicant /Business Support/RM  | An applicant can withdraw from the assessment at any point. They should be asked to provide their decision in writing (letter or email). If an applicant becomes non-contactable, communication may be sent asking if they wish to continue with their assessment confirming that if, no response is received within 7days the assessment will be ended. |

## Checks & References

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| **Checks – a) DBS/ Access NI** | Business Support | (Applicant and all adult household members - HHM) Enhanced level DBS/ Access NI checks (included related government listings of persons unsuitable to work with children, known as the ‘barred list’) on all membersof the household aged 18 years plus |
| Business Support | Criminal record checks are undertaken on every household member over age 18. |

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|  | ISW / Recruitment Manager/ RM | (Applicant and HHM) Where a criminal offence is shown on the DBS check then a DBS Risk Assessment mustbe completed (usually by the ISW), endorsed by the Recruitment Manager, and authorised by the RM.  |
| Business Support | Overseas checks (equivalent to DBS) for Applicant who have lived abroad for a significant period of time as adults. See guidance below. |
| **Checks – b) Medical** | Business Support/AMA/RM | Letter sent to Applicant enclosing the CoramBAAF Form AH asking them to make an appointment with their GP for a medical, applicant takes AH form, forwarding letter with SAE to the GP at the appointment, and once completed is then returned to RSO.CoramBAAF Form AH is sent to the Agency Medical Advisor for their comments about the Applicant’s suitability to foster. These comments are reviewed by the ISW and RM and noted verbatim in the Form F Assessment report. |
| **Checks – c) Local Authority/Trust** | Business Support | Checks with Local Authorities (client and child protection records) in whose area(s) the Applicant and any other adult household members live / have lived within the last 10 years. |
| **Checks – d) Ofsted/CIW/CIS** | Business Support | Should be completed for Applicant and HH members |
| **Checks – e) Finance** | ISW (Form F) | Finance check to be completed. |
| **Checks – f)****School/Nursery/Health Visitor** | Business Support | Enquiries about Applicant’s own children unless an existing carer with a Looked After Child that istransferring then School checks for Looked After Children may also be appropriate. |
| **Checks – g) Landlord** | Business Support | The details should then be uploaded alongside the response from the Landlord.  |

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| **Checks – h) Armed Forces Checks** | Business Support | See guidance below re Armed Forces checks |
| **References – a) Personal****references** | Business Support and ISW | Minimum of two personal referees, who will also be interviewed by the ISW using Personal Referee InterviewTemplate. |
| **References – b) Family****references** | Business Support and ISW | Form for Adult Child of Applicants Interview Template’ should be used for interviewing adult birth childrenof applicants. |
| **References - c) Employer references** | Business Support | Previous employer references sought for applicant’s employment (paid or unpaid) involving any children or vulnerable adults. The Registered Manager may use discretion to form a view as to when reasonable efforts have been made to obtain historical checks taking into account all other sources of information available within the assessment to consider whether sufficient evidence is available to inform a view as to the suitability of the applicant to foster.Employer checks for current employment (unless short term of employment with current employer then previous employer may also be contacted). NB: If Applicant has fostered children during the previous 12 months, and the agency is satisfied with the references that were sought by the other agency, then new personal references and references from previous partners or past employers need not be sought thoughthere is discretion to do so. |
| **References – d) Former Partner References** | Business Support | Guidance about interviewing former partners is included in Form F template. See also guidance below.NB: If Applicant has fostered children during the previous 12 months, and the agency is satisfied with thereferences that were sought by the other agency, then new references from previous partners need not be sought though there is discretion to do so. |
| **References – e) Current or Previous Fostering Agency and/or Adoption Agency** | Business Support | Reference from any previous fostering agency (this may include having access to the information that the agency has on file about the Applicant).If currently fostering, a protocol meeting will to be arranged if there are children in placement. |

# Employment and Voluntary Work Checks within Assessment

An employer check will be sought in respect of each applicant’s current employer and all substantive employers within the most recent 2 years.

Checks will be sought in respect of all substantive paid or unpaid work with children or with vulnerable adults undertaken from the age of 18 years. This would not ordinarily include babysitting or very informal tasks but would be likely to include voluntary work such as sports coaching or Au Pair work.

It is recognised that some checks will be difficult to obtain and may be seen as less critical than others when taken in the context of all information available within the assessment and the Assessment Manager will have discretion to determine the appropriateness of repeated chases for checks that are seen as less critical to informing the recommendation when taken in the broader context of available information. The Form F assessment report should reference this decision making where appropriate.

# Former Partner Referee Interviews

Whilst there is no specific regulatory requirement to interview former partners of Applicants, there is a specific requirement that enquiries will be made and information sought about previous marriages and partnerships and that all available relevant information must be taken into

account in the assessment of an Applicant’s suitability. As such, it is considered best practice to seek to interview ‘significant’ ex-partners wherever possible, with the consent of the Applicant. Examples of when this may be appropriate include where the former relationship(s) included parenting or child-care responsibilities. Even where there are no children of the former relationship(s), any concerns about safety or a history of violence must be looked into carefully.

Written references will be requested from former partners and usually followed up by either a face-to-face or a telephone interview by the ISW using a specific template. The RM will use their discretion to establish which former partners should be contacted though former partners with whom an applicant has lived with or has had children with are likely to be regarded as significant. Where it is considered inappropriate to contact a significant former partner e.g. the relationship may have been characterised by domestic abuse or to contact the former partner may cause distress particularly to a child or may de-stabilise the family, the ISW and RM ensure that the relevant detail is recorded in the Form F.

In cases where the Applicant advises that their former partner is untraceable, the ISW and RM will need to demonstrate and record in the Form F that reasonable steps have been undertaken to contact a significant former partner. Where finding a former partner has not been possible or a decision has been taken that it would be inappropriate to contact a particular former partner, then the assessor should expect to interview people who knew

the couple when they were together to obtain reliable third-party verification of an

applicant’s account of that relationship. The information should be considered alongside all other information pertaining to an applicant’s suitability to foster and a judgement call made about whether sufficient evidence is available within the assessment as a whole for an application to appropriately proceed to recommendation.

The focus of the interview should be on demonstrating the likely ability of an applicant to care for a child safely and on the competence of the Applicant’s parenting abilities given the demands they are likely to face from children placed.

Where there are children, the former partner’s views in relation to the perceived impact of fostering on the child should be sought. Furthermore, the ISW should meet with/interview children from previous relationships where they stay overnight in what will be the fostering household - as they are already required to do for other “members of the household”.

In considering the input of former partners, every effort should be made to verify information, including an explanation of the relationship breakdown. The nature of the existing relationship between former partners should be considered when evaluating information received about the Applicant from this source.

# Adult Children Referee Interviews

Adult Birth Children are likely to be a particularly useful source of detailed information

giving insight into the applicant’s lifestyle and parenting abilities though they may have a limited point of reference. It is important that all reasonable efforts are made to interview all adult birth children and that should be done using a template to generate best quality information.

# Referees Confirming Accuracy of Interview Record

All referees, including Personal Referees, Family Referees, Adult Birth Children and Former Partners should be asked to sign confirmation of the content of their interviews. However, an application will not be delayed if a signature has not been received as long as the referee has clearly had the opportunity to comment / inform of any miss-understanding/ inaccuracy.

A POP assessment may also be undertaken of a lodger, a resident friend or family member (though not usually an adult child of the family) or another person who is integral to the household.

This is a discreet assessment and will include a DBS/ Access NI check, a Local Authority check and may include former partner checks as appropriate.

The Assessment Manager will set out the need for a POP assessment determining this to be proportionate to the involvement of the identified person within the household as a very regular visitor or adult household member.

The POP assessment will usually be undertaken by the Assessing Social Worker and will be considered by the Assessment Manager and by the Service Manager – Assessments.

Key information within the POP assessment will also feature within the Form F assessment report.

*ISP does not use the Person on the Periphery (POP) assessment*.

# Assessing Dogs and Pets

Assessments of dogs and pets will be undertaken by the Assessing Social Worker without automatic reference to a professional specialising in work with animals.

In households with 3 or more dogs an additional (3 plus dogs) form should be completed.

If the Assessing Social Worker / Assessment Manager believe that a professional view eg from a vet or from a dog behaviourist may be appropriate then such an assessment may be commissioned.

# Social media / Internet checks

Social Media checks should follow the principle as guided by Coram Baaf ‘Undertaking Checks and References in Fostering and Adoption Assessments’ (2019) p96-102.

Key points as summarised within the above are that:

1. ‘A proportionate search could include putting the applicant’s name into a reputable internet search engine and viewing any linked sites. It would be appropriate to search sites such as Facebook and YouTube in a similar way.’
2. The information to be searched is that which is publicly available. ‘It would not normally be appropriate to ask applicants to provide any passwords or access to any personal area of social networking website or similar site’.
3. Internet checks should only be carried out in a spirit of openness, and with the full understanding of the person being assessed.

# Overseas Checks

Overseas checks (which may be a check with a police service of another country or may be a certificate of good conduct from a state embassy or other recognised state agency) are not

a statutory requirement of an assessment but may be appropriate in accounting for the good conduct of an applicant while outside of the UK.

As part of the assessment process, a check with an overseas authority will sometimes be sought. Such checks will normally be undertaken where:

* + The applicant has lived abroad for more than a year in one main country and can provide an address for the purposes of the check;
	+ The period in question is within the last 10 years, and/or is of a relatively long duration compared with the time spent living in the UK;
	+ It is not possible to identify a sufficiently detailed and reliable employer reference from a recognised international company or organization for the period in question;
	+ The country in question has a sufficiently developed legal and administrative system to make it likely that a check might be considered valid and reliable.

In applying this, the agency will use some discretion, considering individual factors, including the quality of personal references that cover the period the person was living abroad and the emerging evidence in the assessment more widely.

The reasons for decisions about overseas checks will be recorded and made available within the assessment report.

# Smoking

Fostering applicants will be advised that they cannot be approved to care for children under the age of 5 years should any household member smoke cigarettes.

Fostering applicants will also be advised that for their own health and their role-modelling for young people then they will be well advised to make efforts to stop smoking.

Applicants who have ceased smoking prior to the start of the fostering assessments could be approved as ‘non-smokers’ but applicants who cease smoking during their assessment would not normally be approved to care for children under 5 years of age at initial approval.

*Channels and Choices Fostering Agency will retain an expectation that all foster parents have reported ceasing smoking for 12 months before they can be approved as a non-smoker and care for children under 5 years of age.*

# Armed Forces Checks

If an Applicant is currently, or has previously served, in the British Armed Forces then a statutory vetting check should be sought.

* + The Armed Forces check should also be used if the Applicant is one of the following:
	+ A partner of someone currently serving with HM Forces
	+ The Partner of a civilian working overseas with HM Forces
	+ The Former partner of someone serving with HM Forces
	+ Ex-Service

**Note:** All sensitive data such as medicals, references and any associated documents relating to an assessment that uniquely identifies an individual prospective foster parent must be uploaded securely to the Charms system and the original should then be destroyed in line with GDPR guidelines. Original documents must not be stored, filed or retained in any way. Please refer to the Data Protection Policy for further guidance.

### References, Regulations, Legislation & Links

The Legislative and Regulatory Framework – England

The assessment and approval of foster parents in England is set out in [The Fostering](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/contents/made) [Services (England) Regulations (2011)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/contents/made) – Regulations 26 and 27, and the [Fostering Services:](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf) [National Minimum Standards (2011)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/192705/NMS_Fostering_Services.pdf) - standards 13 and 14.

[The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/984/contents/made) [Amendments) Regulations 2013](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/984/contents/made) amended the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 to create a two-stage assessment process. Stage 1 of the Foster Parent assessment covers the checks specified in Schedule 3 of Fostering Regulations. If information emerges from Stage 1 checks to suggest an applicant is not suitable to become a foster parent, the assessment can be formally ended by an Agency Decision Maker (providing it is done within ten days of receipt of **all** the Stage 1 information).

Stage 2 of the foster parent assessment is the formal, detailed assessment (home study). Regulations allow Stage 1 and 2 to be commenced at the same time, and this is usually what the agency will do, unless there are specific reasons to seek Stage 1 checks prior to commencing Stage 2.

Further statutory guidance was issued by the Department of Education in July 2013 – [Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275764/20130522statutory_guidanceassessment_and_approval_of_foster_carers_final.pdf) [and Regulations, Volume 4: Fostering Services](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/275764/20130522statutory_guidanceassessment_and_approval_of_foster_carers_final.pdf).

The Regulations and Minimum Standards govern practice and set the standards against which the agency is inspected by Regulators (Ofsted).

### Regulatory

* + [Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance](http://coreonline/resources/Legislation%20%20Statutory%20Guidance/England/July%202013%20Assessment%20and%20approval%20of%20foster%20carers%20%20Amendments%20to%20the%20Children%20Act%201989%20Guidance%20and%20Regulations.pdf) [and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services](http://coreonline/resources/Legislation%20%20Statutory%20Guidance/England/July%202013%20Assessment%20and%20approval%20of%20foster%20carers%20%20Amendments%20to%20the%20Children%20Act%201989%20Guidance%20and%20Regulations.pdf)
	+ [Complying with GDPR and DPA 2018](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/data-protection-act-2018/)
	+ [Independent Review Mechanism (England)](http://www.independentreviewmechanism.org.uk/)
	+ [The Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous](http://coreonline/resources/Legislation%20%20Statutory%20Guidance/England/ENG%20-%20Care%20Planning%20and%20FS%20regulations%202013.pdf) [Amendments) Regulations 2013](http://coreonline/resources/Legislation%20%20Statutory%20Guidance/England/ENG%20-%20Care%20Planning%20and%20FS%20regulations%202013.pdf)
	+ [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2 Care Planning, Placement and Case](http://coreonline/resources/Legislation%20%20Statutory%20Guidance/England/June%202015%20The%20Children%20Act%201989%20guidance%20and%20regulations%20%20Volume%202%20care%20planning%2C%20placement%20and%20case%20review.pdf) [Review](http://coreonline/resources/Legislation%20%20Statutory%20Guidance/England/June%202015%20The%20Children%20Act%201989%20guidance%20and%20regulations%20%20Volume%202%20care%20planning%2C%20placement%20and%20case%20review.pdf)
	+ [The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/contents/made)
	+ [The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards (England) 2011](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fostering-services-national-minimum-standards)
	+ [Training Support Development Standards (England) 2011](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/training-support-and-development-standards-for-foster-care-evidence-workbook)

### Guidance

* + ‘Undertaking a Fostering Assessment’ Roger Chapman – CoramBAAF (updated 2019) (CoramBAAF publication)
	+ Effective Fostering Panels, CoramBAAF 2019 England (CoramBAAF publication)
	+ Fostering Regulations, Guidance and NMS 2011 (England), (Fostering Network publication)
	+ Undertaking Checks and References in Fostering and Adoption Assessments (CoramBaaf 2019)
	+ CoramBAAF Guidance notes for Prospective Foster Carer Report (Form F)
	+ CoramBAAF Practice Notes:

42: Placing Children with Dog-Owning Families

51: Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked After Children and their Carers

55: Using the Internet in Fostering and Adoption Assessments

60: Undertaking Overseas Checks in Fostering and Adoption Assessments

61: Home Safety Checks in Fostering and Adoption

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| **File Read Template** |
| **Subject Name(s):**  |  |  |
| **Date of File Read:**  |  |
| **Carried out By:** |  |
| **Name and address of agency where file read completed:** **Approval Criteria:****Initial Approval Date:** |

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| **Form F**  |
| **Date original form F completed:**  |
| **Comments/arising recommendations:** |
| **Details of References Interviewed for Form F  *Please provide names of all referees and an overview of the reference provided – please clearly identify references from ex-partners, or indicate why ex-partner refs may be missing for specific applicants*** |
| **Name of referee & date of reference:** **Overview of reference:**  |
| **Name of referee & date of reference:** **Overview of reference:**  |
| **Name of referee & date of reference:** **Overview of reference:**  |
| **Name of referee & date of reference:** **Overview of reference:** |
| **Name of referee & date of reference:** **Overview of reference:** |
| **Date/s of any updated Form F:**  |
| **Details of changes in circumstances:**  |

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| **Medical Checks**  |
| **Dates of completed medical checks for each applicant, and please detail relevant information & Medical Advisor comments for each check:** |
| **DBS checks** |
| **Dates of completed checks for each applicant and please detail any relevant information:** |
| **Local Authority checks** |
| **Dates of completed checks for each applicant and please detail any relevant information:** |
| **Social Media Checks** |
| **Dates of completed checks for each applicant and please detail any relevant information:** |
| **Recent Health and Safety Assessments seen: YES/NO** (if yes complete details) |
| **Recommendations/comments regarding home environment:** |
| **Foster Carer Reviews** |
| **Date/s** | **Overview of positives & any issues raised *were recommendations made & completed? Comments from panel minutes per review*** |
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| **Have there been any complaints or allegations made against these carers? YES/NO** (if yes please complete details) |
| **Date of allegation/complaint:****Details & Outcome:** |
| **Date of allegation/complaint:****Details & Outcome:** |
| **Date of allegation/complaint:****Details & Outcome:** |

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| **TSDS (previously CWDC)** |
| **Date completed/signed off** |  |

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| **Full Training List** |
| **Name of Course** | **Date** | **Which carer attended?** |
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| **Any Comments from Agency Staff or previous Supervising Social Worker** |
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| **Recommendations Following File Read:** |
| **Strengths/Vulnerabilities *please detail areas of strength/expertise, issues of diversity, working in partnership, attitude to training and development and make appropriate recommendations regarding the application to transfer.*** |

**Guidance Notes**

**Introduction**

This guidance works in conjunction with the Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol set down by The Fostering Network April 2012.

All applicants who have previously fostered or are foster carers must have all previous files read including where an applicant has had more than one previous agency.

Permission needs to be sought in writing that the carers have given their permission to read their files.

Once allocated a file read, the PiCS colleague needs to make an appointment with Agency/LA to read the files within 48 hours.

All notes taken during the file read must be typed up using this pro-forma, placed on the applicants’ file and shared with the Registered Manager to later be cross referenced in their Form F.

To ensure a degree of independence, it is advisable and practical that the file reader must not have previously assessed the applicants.

**File read** - Although the below must be considered they are not exhaustive and professional judgement needs to be used regarding relevant information.

* Start from the original Form F – move to panel minutes.
* AHRs must all be checked – look at recommendations of the reviews and whether they were followed through to next year.
* Look at previous checks, medical adviser’s comments, LA checks and DBS.
* Look at previous references on file. Under the new protocol - As the file reader you can take account of reference information obtained by the existing provider as long as the file reader is satisfied as to its quality and continuing relevance. This may save interviewing an ex-partner. Guidance can be found in Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers: Amendments to the Children’s Act 1989 Guidance and Regulation Vol. 4 Fostering Services 2013.
* Risk Assessment & Safe Care Plan –take details and if a young person is transferring to PiCS ask for a copy.

**Complaints & allegations** – please verify the status of this. However, reading the correspondence and file notes may alert you to practice issues. Notes of this must be taken.

If complaints and allegations are recorded, please take full details.

Make note of all training attended and still outstanding.

Please ask for a copy of their last AHR and minutes from their current agency/local authority.

Finally ask clarification questions to the current agency and if you can speak to the carers’ supervising social worker.

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| **Previous fostering service reference Template** |
| **NAME OF APPLICANT(S)** |  |

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| **PERSON COMPLETING THE REFERENCE** |
| **Name** |  |
| **Address** |  |
| **Email** |  |
| **Telephone** |  |

**Details of registration**

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| **Name of current fostering service:** |  |
| **Date of carer(s) approved from and to:** |  |
| **Current terms of approval and date this was agreed:** |  |
| **Details of variations of approval in the last five years:** |  |

**Details of placements**

Please provide details of all foster children placed with the applicants during the last **five years**

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| **Child’s initials** | **Age** | **Gender** | **Date(s) of placements (s)** |
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| **Please comment on the extent to which the foster carers were able to achieve the placements objectives** |
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**Details of approval**

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| **Please comment on the strengths and skills of the foster carers** |
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| **Date and outcome of any investigation of allegations or concerns, other than unsubstantiated, unfounded or malicious allegations (which paragraph 3.79 of the fostering services Statutory Guidance directs should not be referred to in references)** |
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| **Details of any current allegations or concerns** |
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| **The outcomes of the latest carer review** |
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| **Please provide any other information considered to be relevant to the assessment of the person’s suitability to foster** |
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| **Signature** |  |
| **Date** |  |