



Over the past few years, more and more people have become regular users of the internet and social media. These platforms can contain a huge amount of information about individuals on an employment, social and personal levels. It is the responsibility of the adoption agency to ensure that applicants are suitable to care for children and young people. Buckinghamshire Council Adoption Service considers it to be good practice to undertake social media checks on prospective adopters during stage 1(stage 2 if fast tracked).

# Buckinghamshire Council Adoption Service

# Social Media Policy

As soon as a Registration of Interest (ROI) has been accepted, Stage 1 starts from the date of the Registration of Interest acceptance date. A social worker will be allocated, and a Stage One plan/agreement will be agreed with the applicant/s. Initial checks, e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), medical, Local Authority checks, Health and Safety check, Pet Questionnaire, written references are completed and any other checks or information which the agency considers to be relevant such as social media checks, electoral role and counselling references.

The consent form, within the Registration of Interest Form, gives permission from the applicant for the agency to undertake checks using search engines and social media sites.

Social media and internet checks will be undertaken by the assessing social worker who will enter the applicants’ names (including maiden or alias) into a search engine such as Google, Bing, Yahoo!, etc which can lead onto social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, etc that are publicly visible. Staff should not log into their personal accounts to check applicants’ profiles. These checks may be expanded depending on any information that emerges from the initial checks or any other information that becomes available.

Checks will only reveal profiles, photos, videos and comments that are in the public domain and only when security settings have not been correctly set up by the applicant(s).

Applicant(s) will not be requested to provide any personal passwords as these are not publicly available. The nature of checks undertaken, and the outcome of those checks will be recorded and made available within the assessment report if applicable.

Any information revealed in the checks which is a cause for concern will be discussed with the applicant at the first available opportunity. Causes for concern might include any inappropriate material, whether in video, photo or written form, including views and opinions, whether implicit or explicit, that are not in line with the values of the organisation and could impact on the person’s suitability to adopt a child/ren. Consideration must be given when information about an applicant has been placed on the internet by a third party as this may or may not be reliable/factual information.

The applicant will be given the opportunity to provide their perspective, and this will be considered in the context of the assessment as a whole. The social worker will discuss any findings of concern with their line manager and a decision will be made on how to proceed.

The implications of internet use should be made explicit from the start of the assessment process. There is information in the public domain about how to configure appropriate privacy settings. Applicants should understand that they need to maintain their own confidentiality and that of any child who may be placed with them.

Information on internet safety are given to prospective adopters once a Registration of Interest is accepted, it is also within our adoption guide and further links in appendix 1.

**Reference**

“Undertaking checks and references in fostering and adoption assessments 2019” CoramBAAF.

**Appendix 1 - Online safety**

Websites for staying safe when on a phone/tablet/computer for adults or children:

[Taking care of your privacy and digital footprint | Childline](https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/taking-care-your-digital-footprint/)

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

[https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nspcc.org.uk%2Fkeeping-children-safe%2Fonline-safety%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cclare.talbot%40buckinghamshire.gov.uk%7C1b24a263e42241bbd3e008d963ba4882%7C7fb976b99e2848e180861ddabecf82a0%7C0%7C0%7C637650474198196976%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=rT6eVFhLTCjdjJjw4OMZ6W%2BV2qDN6gRJnlgK%2FIeRbmY%3D&reserved=0)

[Remove a nude image shared online | Childline](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.childline.org.uk%2Finfo-advice%2Fbullying-abuse-safety%2Fonline-mobile-safety%2Fremove-nude-image-shared-online%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cclare.talbot%40buckinghamshire.gov.uk%7C1b24a263e42241bbd3e008d963ba4882%7C7fb976b99e2848e180861ddabecf82a0%7C0%7C0%7C637650474198206970%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=lo7FcA6%2BDF7KjoScoM9HPvynKR%2BEoeAV9sv9DgdAXVA%3D&reserved=0)



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