**Initial Visit Guidance**

Discussion about Information pack

* Whether it has been helpful
* Any clarification needed

## Name of Applicants

Quickly check on the details

* Check the spelling of the name of applicants and household members.
* Check address, telephone numbers, ethnic background, and residency/citizenship.

# Communication/Literacy + Advocacy

* Applicants’ fluency in spoken language, written and reading skills.
* If English is not their first language, how are the applicants developing their language skills?

# Resource to be provided

* No. of children
* Age range
* Type of resource
* Disabilities

## Gender

# Accommodation

* Rented/Owned/Housing Association. If rented accommodation, are they paying regularly and how long is their tenancy for?
* Check all rooms in the house and check the garden (if they have one)
* Space available for a foster child? Which room?
* Neighborhood, local shops/schools/transport network/parks/leisure centers etc
* Do you have a fire or smoke alarm in your home. If yes where and how often do you test it? If no, a discussion about having a fire alarm installed. Discussion about a health and safety report during the assessment.
* Are you planning to make major repairs or amendments to your home
* Are you planning to move soon?

**Employment**

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* Working hours of applicant(s)
* Kind of employment
* How applicant(s) will be able to work and manage fostering tasks.

**Ability to undertake fostering tasks**

* Flexibility in working times
* Availability to take children to school, contact at a contact centre or family home, LAC meetings, training, and foster carer support groups very month
* If the family has got children of school age, how do they currently organize it? If yes, how will they manage school runs for their own children and foster child(ren)?

 **Motivation**

* Why do you want to foster?
* How long have you been thinking about it?
* If the applicants have children, have they had a discussion with their children and how have their children responded to their interest in fostering?
* What is the applicants experience with children (private and professionally)
* Have they attended any relevant courses?

 **Family Background**

* Description of applicants’ birth family including where they live and how often they see each other?
* If applicants were not born in the U.K., when did they come to the U.K.?
* Description of applicants’ own family, including the number of children or household members
* What is your relationship like with your parents, siblings, children, or any significant family members?

**Upbringing**

* How would you describe your childhood experiences? Both positive and negative experiences.
* Describe your parent(s)/caregivger(s)
* How did your parents/caregiver(s) discipline you?
* Were your parent(s)/caregiver(s) supportive of your education? If yes how?
* On reflection do you agree/disagree with the way your parents raised you?
* How has your parenting experience influenced the way you have raised your own children
* How has your parenting experience influenced the way you work with and understand children and young people (if applicant(s) is childless)
* Discussion with the applicant(s) about how personal experiences may impact on fostering.

**Relationship**

* How long has the couple been married, living together, or been in a relationship?
* Describe your relationship. How do you solve disputes and deal with stressful situations?
* Is fostering a joint decision of all family members?
* Have the applicant(s) had any other significant relationships in the past? If yes, reasons why the relationship ended. Was there any domestic violence or abuse in the relationship?
* Do the applicant(s) have any children with previous partners?
* If there are children with a previous partner, do they have contact with your ex-partner? If yes, how regular is contact. If no, reasons why there is no contact. Please explore further.
* Discussion about interviewing previous partners

**Support Network**

* Who would be able to give emotional and practical support
* Explain the importance of a nominated carer who is willing to give practical support in case of emergency, when applicant(s) need to attend training, meetings or even when they want to take a break.
* Inform applicant(s) that CRB checks, Local Authority checks and possibly a heath and safety check if child will be looked after in nominated carer’s home.
* Discussion about the importance of a nominated carer’s availability during the week and weekends.

**Behavior Management**

* What is your understanding of challenging behavior
* Discussion about examples of dealing with challenging behavior with their own children or in a professional setting and how they have managed it
* Discuss examples of challenging behavior with foster children living in their home such as verbal abuse, physical aggression, stealing, lying, self harming, eating disorders, bedwetting, child unable to sleep etc.
* Discussion about Tower Hamlets non smacking policy
* Discussion about mandatory training and various training on childcare, support from SSW and foster carers.

**Diversity**

* Discussion about working with difference. (e.g.) children who may behave differently from their own children and children who have had different life experiences from their own children.
* Discussion with the applicants giving examples about how they would support or make a difference in a child’s life
* Discussion about LAC and the role of foster carers to support education and advocate on their behalf.
* Discussion about how the applicant(s) may be able to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Assess knowledge and experience.
* Discussion about how applicant(s) would support young people with sexuality issues
* Discussion with applicant(s) about their views on gays and lesbian in fostering, and how they would support a child or young person moving on to long term or adoption with same sex couples.
* Informing applicants about training available. Working with difference.

 **Religion**

* Do the applicant(s) have a religion? If yes, how do they practice their religion?
* What role does religion play in their lives? How fostering impact on the applicant(s) practicing their religion.
* Discussion about how the applicants would be able to meet the needs of a child from a different religious background which includes taking them to places of worship such as a church, mosque, temple, synagogue etc
* Discussion of department’s expectation on carers during religious festivals during Christmas and Ramadan.

 **Health and Fitness**

* Have the applicant(s) or family members had any medical conditions, mental health issues or problems with substance misuse in the past? (e.g.) terminations, miscarriages, hospital admissions.
* Do the applicant(s) or family members have any current medical conditions, mental health issues or problems with substance misuse?
* Are you taking medication for a health condition? If yes, what is the name of the medication, how long have you been taking it, and how many times a day are you taking the medication for. Are there any side effects to taking the medication?
* Do the applicant(s) keep fit? If yes, how do they keep fit?
* Discussion about Every Child Matters, being healthy and the importance of encouraging stimulating activities and healthy eating.

**Pets/Car/Smoking**

* Do the applicant(s) have any pets?
* Are the applicants planning to get a pet or more pets soon?
* What kind of pet(s) do the applicants have?
* What is the pet’s character like?
* Has the pet ever attacked anyone?
* Discussion about a pet questionnaire and possibly a pet trainer assessment for the pet if we proceed with a foster carer assessment.
* Do the applicants have a car? If yes, who drives?
* Do they have an up-to-date MOT and car insurance in place?
* Does anybody in the household smoke any substances, chew tobacco, Kat, beetle nut and shish.

**Finances**

* Do you have any home insurance?
* Discussions about considering home insurance when fostering or informing their insurance company that they are foster carers.
* Discussion about the applicant(s) general household income. Are they living within their means financially? How do they manage financially?
* Discussion with the applicant(s) about fostering allowances and the importance of being financially stable before they foster.
* Do the applicant(s) have any significant debts such as personal loans, secured and unsecured, housing arrears, credit cards and store cards?
* If yes, what are they doing about the debts? Are they making regular payments towards paying off their debt?

**Criminal Convictions/Children looked after by a Local Authority**

* Do the applicant(s) or anyone in their family have any criminal convictions? This includes spent, unspent or cautions. Inform applicants that any convictions when they were younger or years ago will show on their DBS.
* If applicants have any convictions, please ask them to describe the nature of the offences, dates when it occurred and details of the conviction.
* Has the family and any members of the family been known to social services. If yes please take names, DOB, and name of local authority.

 **Specific details about fostering**

## Contact with birth parents

* **Information about assessment process**
* **Collaboration with Social Services**
* **Availability for courses**