

Form F (Prospective Foster Carer Report) England

Guidance notes and
additional resources

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Form F (Prospective Foster Carer Report) England (2025)

Guidance notes and additional resources

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Checklist for completing Form F

Tick to indicate which sections have been completed and are included:

Front sheet	Introductory information and social worker's recommendation	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section A: Part One	Applicant's details Home address Identity Partnership or relationship status Children under 18 living in the household Other adults living in the household Children (under 18) from a current or previous partnership living elsewhere Adult children living elsewhere Applications or assessments to be a foster carer, kinship carer, adopter or child-minder	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section A: Checks	Enhanced DBS checks (applicants and adult household members) Health Home local authority check Previous local authority checks – for the past 10 years Household accommodation Former significant partners	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section A: References	Personal references	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section A: Part Two	Verification of documents Court proceedings Current employment or volunteering Previous employment or volunteering involving children or vulnerable adults	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Household finance Pets and animals Social media and internet checks School, nursery and health visitor checks Other checks		
Section B: Part One	About the applicant/s – description and analysis		
	1. Motivations and reasons for fostering 2. Strengths, passions, likes, challenges Analysis	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Current relationship or not in a relationship 4. How you live – a typical week 5. Everyone in the home Analysis	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
	6. Family history and childhood 7. Adult life experiences 8. Previous significant relationships 9. Family members not living in the home Analysis	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
	10. Education 11. Regular commitments 12. Social health 13. Training and development Analysis	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
	14. Household finances Analysis	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>

	15. Overall analysis	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section B: Part Two	What does the child need? Identity and relationships (1-7) – analysis Advocacy and empowerment (8-15) – analysis Being part of a foster family (16 - 25) – analysis Strengthening and building resilience (26 - 36) – analysis	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section C	Supporting information References Other checks and material	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section D	Specialist reports	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>
Section E	Summary and recommendation Timescales Brief summary Recommendation The applicant/s observations on the report	Required	<input type="checkbox"/>

Introduction

Form F has been updated to promote strengths-based and trauma-informed ways of working, with a new focus on the child's needs and a more streamlined process.

The role of the assessing social worker is to work alongside the applicant/s, drawing out the individual's suitability, skills needed to be a foster carer, relevant experiences and achievements. Whilst undertaking this, the assessing social worker will identify any skills gaps alongside solutions to address these via training, development opportunities and shadowing experiences. The assessment has a focus on establishing that the applicants have the capacity to therapeutically parent a child who has experienced trauma and loss. Trauma-informed parenting is grounded in the understanding that trauma exposure can impact a child's neurological, biological, psychological and social development. Trauma-informed parenting acknowledges the need to see beyond a child's presenting behaviours and to ask, 'What does this child need?' (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2022).

This is a tool to be used by an assessing social worker alongside the prospective foster carer/s. The form is not to be sent to prospective foster carer/s with an expectation they complete any sections on their own in advance of a visit.

It is expected that the assessment process will take an average of six months over a series of visits to the applicant/s home, some meetings in the fostering service offices and through observations. It might be that the assessment is completed in less than six months, but rushing the process is not advisable.

These notes provide guidance about completing the Form F (Prospective Foster Carer Report) England (2025). The guidance notes are accompanied by the book, *Undertaking a Fostering Assessment* (new edition 2025).

Practice advice and suggestions for how to use the form are provided in this guidance under the relevant section headings.

Form F is not a matching report or matching mechanism, and it should not be shared between local authorities and independent fostering services as part of initial matching discussions, nor at any stage in a matching process. This is applicable for short-term, long-term and other types of fostering.

It will usually make sense to complete the form sequentially; however, it might be agreed between the assessing social worker and the applicant/s that certain sections are discussed before others.

If the assessment process is paused, then an explanation needs to be added so that panel members and the agency decision-maker can understand the reasons why the assessment took longer.

If sections of Form F are amended as a result of feedback from the applicant/s, clear dates need to be recorded next to the updated sections.

The applicant/s observations on the report final page can be used to make edits if the applicant/s disagree with written sections.

There are two stages to the assessment process. Stage 1 requires the collection of essential factual information about the applicant in accordance with Regulation 26(1A). This requires the fostering service to obtain particular information, carry out checks and request references. Through the gathering of this basic information, applicants who are judged to be clearly unsuitable will be advised of

this decision at this point. Stage 2 is the thorough and robust assessment of the applicant/s suitability and capacity to become a foster carer. Stages 1 and 2 can be completed consecutively or concurrently. Assessing social workers need to be familiar with fostering regulations if carrying out both stages at the same time. The fostering panel will require the assessing social worker to submit a brief report in the event that it becomes clear during Stage 2 that an applicant is not suitable to proceed with their assessment.

Qualification and experience of assessing social worker

Assessing prospective foster carers is an important responsibility. The social worker will need to gather and present information that can be understood by the fostering panel and agency decision-maker. The assessing social worker should undertake this with regular support from their manager.

The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 (23.6) require that any person ‘involved in assessing the suitability of persons to be foster carers are social workers, have experience of foster care and family placement work and are trained in assessment. Social work students and social workers who do not have relevant experience only carry out assessments under the close supervision of an appropriately experienced social worker, who takes responsibility for the assessment.’ Accountability is key, so in these circumstances the names of both social workers should be clearly stated on the form where a name is required, and both should sign the completed assessment.

Before beginning an assessment using Form F, the manager overseeing the assessment will need to know that the assessing social worker is suitably qualified, trained and experienced. CoramBAAF runs regular training sessions on [undertaking assessments using Form F](#).

Timescales

The assessment of individuals, a couple, or two people living in the same home regarding their suitability and capacity to foster is not something that can be rushed. The average length of time to thoroughly assess is six months. This is a two-way process undertaken at the same time as the assessing social worker is exploring motivations, experiences, skills and areas requiring support. The applicant is afforded the chance to consider whether fostering is right for them and whether now is the right time for their family. Some fostering services aim to carry out an assessment in closer to four months, but achieving this relies on the availability of the social worker and applicants to engage intensely in the process. It requires other factors to align as well, for example, referees’ availability and a panel slot. The role and responsibility of a foster carer is serious and as such requires the necessary time to reflect, research and fully consider all elements.

Many applicants will have completed their preparatory training prior to the assessment starting; for others, there may be overlap where applicants may be completing their preparatory training as their assessment is starting. The assessor must provide opportunity for applicant/s to fully consider whether fostering is right for them and crucially is it right for them and their immediate family at this time. This is important to bear in mind as many foster carers leave fostering within two years of being approved. There are many reasons foster carers choose to leave fostering, one being that they had not been made fully aware during their assessment of the expectations of the role and extent of the responsibilities that would be placed on them.

Legal compliance

A fostering assessment starts at the point when the fostering service begins to gather Stage 1 information following receipt of the application to foster – the statutory guidance states that: ‘Once an applicant has contacted the fostering service to which they are applying, the fostering service should seek the information required by regulation 26(1A) as soon as possible’. Many fostering services undertake Stages 1 and 2 in parallel, rather than waiting for all of the Stage 1 information before commencing Stage 2. There is no set timescale for completion of Stage 1 or Stage 2; the expectation in National Minimum Standards is that the entire assessment is completed and a recommendation reached within eight months. Prospective foster carers need to be informed about Stages 1 and 2 of the assessment process, specifically that there is a legal requirement to complete Stage 1 of an assessment and if this cannot be completed, the assessment cannot progress to the panel.

Anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice

The social work profession is guided by its values and principles of anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice. This means that social workers are uniquely placed to lead the way, advocating for equality in our society.

(Social Work England, 2025, Equality, diversity and inclusion action plans)

Social Work professional standards (Social Work England, 2019) state:

As a social worker, I will not abuse, neglect, discriminate, exploit or harm anyone, or condone this by others.

It is essential, as social workers, we continue to reflect on our own biases, values and attitudes and consider how these influence our professional practice. It is important that we use individual and group supervision to reflect on both the way we work with families and on the assessment information we gather, before making recommendations that can have life changing impact for the children and families we support.

Form F is underpinned by the principles of anti-racist and anti-discriminatory practice. It is essential that, assessing social workers, continually develop awareness of biases, beliefs and attitudes and consider how these can influence professional practice when assessing prospective foster carers.

Social work assessments are read by the people they are written about and by a panel of people. This assessment should be read by the prospective foster carers, and there is space for their comments.

It is therefore critical that language is caring, simple and understandable. Avoid jargon, acronyms or professional terminology that the people being written about may not understand, as this can exclude, disempower or reinforce power imbalances.

Sensitive information should be collected and recorded in ways that are appropriate, trauma-informed and anti-racist. Avoid focusing on deficits or using stigmatising language that reinforces stereotypes, erases identities or causes harm. Descriptions should be respectful, person-centred, and free from assumptions or biases. This covers information relating to ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, complex health needs, justice involvement, religion, and other aspects of identity. Be aware of how these areas intersect, as this can increase harm or marginalisation.

We appreciate differences in preferred terms around racially minoritised ethnic groups and acknowledge the need to avoid homogenising lived experiences (Cane, 2023). It will be appropriate to bear in mind the importance of using terms that children and families favour. Prioritise self-identification by asking children and families at the outset what terms they prefer or identify with. Be respectful of their choices, recognising that preferred terminology may reflect personal identity, culture and history. This applies to all aspects of identity.

Perhaps you saw the screen in front of you as the final destination. It was not; your words, written about, but without me, would not remain hidden forever.

Rebekah Pierre - *[An Open Letter to the Social Worker Who Wrote My Case Files, 2022, BASW](#)*

Recording, storing and sharing information

Have confidence to share information – trust your instincts and act on your training, experience and risk assessment skills. [Seek guidance](#) if in doubt.

Department for Education (2024)

It is important to know how the information recorded on Form F is stored on the relevant case management system. Information from Form F will be pulled through to other forms, processes and used for internal and Ofsted reporting purposes. With this in mind, it is vital that information is recorded accurately.

The foster carer profile will need to be completed and viewed as a separate document. Foster carers should be supported to complete their own child-friendly and/or young person-friendly foster family profile, which can be shared with the child or young person prior to moving in. These are often referred to as different documents, included as part of a welcome pack.

What makes good analysis?

Definitions

It is essential to understand the difference between narrative description and analysis.

- **Assessment:** collecting, analysing and recording information about people, their circumstances, and the context of their lives in order to reach an understanding of their situation and to inform decisions.
- **Risk assessment:** weighing up potential benefits as well as potential harms or losses. Taking risks involves deciding the potential benefits of a proposed act outweigh the potential drawbacks.
- **Analysis:** the examination of an issue, problem, topic or situation that goes beyond describing it and includes (one or more of) theories, thoughts, opinions and judgements.
(Oxford Dictionary of Social Work and Social Care, 2018)

Purpose of analysis in Form F

The purpose of the social work analysis in Form F is to provide a clear, concise interpretation of the prospective foster carer's situation based on facts and information gathered, with a specific focus on what each detail means for their capacity to care for a child. The analysis is not a repetition of facts but an explanation of how those facts affect their capacity, motivation, strengths and vulnerabilities and what this will mean for a child in their care. Your goal is to help panels and agency decision-makers understand the reasoning for your recommendation about their ability to provide safe and emotionally attuned care.

Key features of good analysis

Child focused: Ensure that the child is central to your thinking throughout, even when you are describing the behaviour of adults. Think about what the information might mean for the child's experience. The purpose of the analysis is to interpret information about how an adult can meet a child's needs.

Authority: Be confident and authoritative in your analysis, owning your professional opinion.

Clarity: Use straightforward language that everyone can understand. Avoid jargon or language that may have different meanings to different readers. Avoid overly long sentences and unnecessarily formal language.

Focus: Be specific about the behaviours, qualities and attitudes you are describing.

Balance: Be honest about both strengths and vulnerabilities and discuss both robustly and equally. Be clear about potential vulnerabilities and how these can be supported or mitigated against, both now and in the future.

Integrity: Acknowledge what you do not know, identify what you still need to know, and weigh up the significance of any gaps in knowledge.

Be concise and avoid repetition: Be careful not to duplicate information already contained elsewhere in the report. Be concise, specific, succinct and relevant.

Distinguish fact and opinion: Be clear about whether the information is fact or opinion, and whose opinion you are stating.

Acknowledge differences of opinion: Be clear if there are differing views and explain the relevance and significance.

Explore differences: Articulate the ethnic, cultural, faith and sexual orientation context and the significance of this for your analysis. Reflect on your own perceptions, values and attitudes and how these influence your assessment, thinking and decision-making.

Show your workings out: Be clear about your thinking process, and how you have used the available information to reach a conclusion. If an opinion or view has changed, it could be helpful for the reader to understand how and why this happened.

Triangulate facts/views/observations: Check if facts and perspectives are consistent and congruent. Evaluate significance, weight and reliability of information.

Sources of information: State sources and types of references, observations, opinion and information.

There are specific analysis sections throughout Section B and a final analysis section at the end of Section B. Analysis requires the assessing social worker to draw conclusions and views based on the information gathered within each area being discussed and understood. The role of the assessing social worker is to consider what all this information, evidence and recordings from observations means for children and these people as foster carers in the future.

Guidance notes

These notes provide guidance about completing the Prospective Foster Carer Report (Form F) England.

The form is designed for use in England. Country-specific versions of Form F are also in use in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. These country-specific versions are intended to be revised drawing on the revision of Form F England.

The publication of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013 introduced a two-stage process to the assessment of foster carers in England.

Form F is not designed for assessing kinship carers. Form K is an alternative CoramBAAF assessment tool for kinship carers. It has replaced Form C and was launched in February 2025.

Form F and accompanying guidance was last fully updated in 2018; some additional revisions were made in 2019.

Front sheet

The front sheet provides the basic information about the applicant/s and the fostering service. It includes the assessing social worker's recommendation for the approval of the applicant/s.

The social worker should make a recommendation about the applicant/s suitability to be approved as a foster carer, including any terms of approval. Care Planning, Placement and Case Review guidance (3.85) states that 'Foster carer assessments are designed to identify the ages, number and needs of the children to whom the foster carer is most likely to offer the best care'.

Regulation 25(1)(b) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended) states that where the fostering panel makes a recommendation about a person's suitability to foster, it must also 'recommend any terms on which the approval is to be given', and guidance clarifies that this might be in terms of the number of children and their ages. Regulation 25(2)(a) states that the panel 'must take into account all the information passed to it', so if that information suggests to the panel that foster carers are suitable for a particular number of children, or children of a particular age range, then the panel's function is to make a recommendation accordingly.

Regulation 27(3) requires the agency decision-maker to take account of the fostering panel's recommendation and any recommended terms for the approval. The decision-maker would not be compliant with this regulation if they disregarded the panel recommendations regarding terms of approval as a matter of routine, without being able to justify that in each individual case and setting out the reasons.

It is not consistent with the regulations or guidance for the local authority to introduce a policy that seeks to restrict the fostering panel from exercising its duties and functions to consider the individual circumstances in each case, as required by regulation 25(1)(b). In other words, it is neither acceptable to ignore the requirement to consider terms of approval, nor to routinely approve foster carers for the age range 0–18 without evidencing in each individual case how they will be able to meet the needs of that whole age range. For instance, if it is clear that applicants are suitable to care for babies and infants, but not older children or teenagers, then this must be stipulated in their terms of approval.

The assessing social worker will need to use the terminology that is used by the fostering service considering the application; this may include descriptors such as short-term, long-term, permanent, respite, short break, emergency, or parent and child.

It is recommended that when describing age, the numbers used relate to the child's birthday. This means that for carers whose approval covers the whole age span of children, then approval will be for children and young people aged 0–18, and approval for a child aged 5–11 allows for placement of a child on or after their fifth birthday, and up to their 11th birthday.

It is essential that the recommendation about terms of approval made in this section is the same as the recommendation that is made in Section E of the form. Terms of approval can be changed through the fostering review process, and there are strong arguments to suggest that realistic approval terms are most appropriate for first-time foster carers.

Pen picture

Many fostering services like to include a one-page pen picture description of the applicant/s and their household, sometimes including a photo. This contains a few facts about the family and the household. The pen picture is not included in this template, but services can insert their own here if desired.

Section A: Part One

Section A includes factual information about the applicant/s and their household. Part One reflects the information that is required to be gathered under Stage 1 of the assessment process. Part Two includes verification of documents and factual information that is required for Stage 2 of the assessment process, and other checks.

Names, date of birth and place of birth

Applicant/s name and preferred name to be recorded as well as their date of birth and place of birth, including the country.

Home address

If the applicant/s address is not their permanent place of residence, provide details about this and explain how this is relevant to the fostering task. Also provide information about how checks have been undertaken if the applicant/s have more than one address.

Identity

This section looks at the applicant/s identity. Some of these areas will require a discussion to make certain that the assessing social worker has understood how the applicant/s self-define themselves.

It is vitally important to consider fine detail within these characteristics and to avoid generalisations. Assessing social workers cannot make any assumptions about aspects of an individual's identity.

When confident that the identity information is correct, this must be updated on the case management system/s and social care databases accordingly.

Researchers at Coventry University, have developed the concept of the “identity see-saw” to represent aspects of identity that are important at a given point in time. ‘It shows one moment in time, whilst recognising that the significance of particular aspects of identity may change based on the child or young person’s experiences, choices or particular contexts’ (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al, 2024). Although this is written about a child’s identity, the same principles should be applied when discussing and recording details about the identity of a prospective foster carer.

Gender: This will be self-defined. The assessing social worker needs to discuss with the prospective foster carer/s how they identify their gender. The gender identified should be recorded in the gender section, and this needs to be recorded accurately throughout the report. There is not a separate box for sex. For some applicants, describing their sex will be how they describe their gender, and this can be added to this box.

Sexual orientation: This is self-defined. It is important to note that someone’s sexual orientation may change and that fluidity should be accepted and not judged. It is also important to discuss sexual orientation with solo prospective foster carers.

Ethnicity: Both ethnicity and ethnic heritage are self-defined by the applicants.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) sets out that ‘the terminology used to describe ethnic groups has changed markedly over time and however defined or measured, tends to evolve in the context of social and political attitudes or developments. Ethnic group is also very diverse, encompassing common ancestry and elements of culture, identity, religion, language and physical appearance.’ It recommends that people should be invited to select, from a list of categories, the ethnic group to which they consider they belong. These categories are also now used by Ofsted and so will be familiar to social workers. The groups are set out below.

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese
- Any other Asian background

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black, Black British, or Caribbean background

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Any other Mixed or multiple ethnic background

White

- English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- Irish
- Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- Roma
- Any other White background

Other ethnic group

- Arab
- Any other ethnic group

Ethnic heritage

It is recognised that these ethnic groups do not represent how all people identify. People are encouraged to write in their ethnic heritage using their own words if they do not identify with any groups in the list.

Linguistic heritage and language/s spoken at home

The assessing social worker should record all the languages spoken at home by the applicant/s. It is also important to record the first or primary language spoken. If two applicants, do they speak to one another in one language or more than one language? What language is used when speaking to the applicant/s children? Does this differ for different children and does this change over time? This important detail needs to be discussed and recorded.

The assessing social worker should explore whether the applicant/s has any language skills that may be an asset in the context of fostering, or whether they have experience of communicating with someone with whom they do not share a language. This should be discussed considering the population demographics specifically and the main languages spoken where the applicant/s lives. Additionally, has the applicant/s considered how they might communicate with a young person who speaks little or no English?

Religion – practising or non-practising, lived or official

The religion or faith group for each applicant is recorded here; this is self-defined. The box below allows for the applicant to describe in more detail what their religion or faith means to them in their life.

This section allows for the applicant to describe how their religion is important to the various elements of their life. Do they practice daily, weekly, monthly or on an ad hoc basis? Does this require attendance at a religious building or setting? Are they part of a religious community and will this community provide support if the applicant is approved?

The terms “lived religion” and “official religion” come from research conducted by Coventry University (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al, 2024) as a result of work done directly with care experienced children and young people around how they experienced religion, with identity at its core. This research is also relevant when thinking about adults’ religion and faith. The concept of lived religion allows an exploration of religion that maps the experiences and perceptions of an individual. Individuals experience religion through their social contexts and cultural practices, what they wear or eat, as well as through texts.

Disability/neurodiversity

The applicant/s should feel supported to share any disabilities or neurodiversity they have; this needs to include instances that are undiagnosed. The applicant/s should be encouraged to share what adjustments and adaptations need to be made, both in relation to completing the assessment and thinking ahead post-approval. There may be adjustments needed for accessing buildings, reading and processing information, accessing training and attendance at the panel.

Nationality and immigration status

Nationality and immigration status will need to be discussed, if appropriate. This information is about how the possible individual outcomes of a pending asylum claim may impact on a couple being able to foster.

Clarity needs to be sought about whether carers' immigration status is resolved or pending and if there are known review dates pending.

Partnership or relationship status

What is the current relationship status of the applicant/s? If there are two applicants and they are being assessed together as a couple, ask each applicant to describe the status of their relationship. If they describe their relationship status differently, it needs to be understood as to why that is.

Assessing social workers will need to have sensitive and exploratory discussions with applicants. For example, an applicant may not consider their relationship serious enough to mention, so it is important to establish what constitutes a significant relationship (such as the length of time they have been together). If the applicant is single, are they actively looking for a partner? If yes, how do they envisage this would impact on their availability and capacity to foster? Would it be important that a new partner was open to being involved and potentially assessed as a foster carer?

This section should also be used to record details of a partner who lives in a different home. This would include a partner who is planning to move to England, for example, waiting for residency, a visa, or refugee status to be granted.

Children under 18 living in the household

This section includes details of all children under the age of 18 years living in the household. This should include details of children who live in the household some of the time regularly as part of a shared care arrangement.

Other adults living in the household

This section includes details of adult children who live at home sometimes, for example, students who live between university and the fostering home (i.e. return home for holidays). The assessing social worker needs to establish who is in the fostering household when everyone who lives at this home is back home, even if these are infrequent visits and for temporary periods. Anyone living in the household at the same time as a child/ren matched with approved foster carers will have a direct impact on the experience of the child. These dynamics need to be explored and understood in the context of their impact on the applicant/s capacity and availability to foster.

Be clear that this is everyone living in the home: lodgers, foreign exchange students, anyone who lives there and who stays over.

Children (under 18) from a current or previous partnership living elsewhere

The details of children, names, ages, dates of birth, and relationship to each applicant need to be recorded here. These may be birth children, adopted children, step-children, or children who were privately fostered.

Adult children living elsewhere

Details of adult children who do not live in the household.

Applications or assessments to be a foster carer, kinship carer, adopter or child-minder.

If the applicant/s have made any previous applications to be foster carers, these must be discussed and the circumstances and outcome recorded. Likewise, if the applicant/s have made applications and/or been assessed to be a kinship carer (including special guardian or private foster carer), adopter or child-minder, the details of these need to be discussed and recorded to include the outcomes. If any of these applications are in progress, pending or there are plans to pursue any of these in the next 12 months, these should also be discussed and recorded.

Section A: Checks

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks: Adams (2017) addresses in detail the issues around undertaking and making judgements in relation to DBS checks, and assessors are expected to be familiar with this material. Each fostering service should have a policy for undertaking DBS checks and Adams (2017) offers advice on what this might cover. The assessing social worker needs to obtain legal advice if an offence against a person or a child is disclosed.

If the DBS discloses an offence that would prevent the applicant from fostering, the assessment may need to stop. Alternatively, if a DBS discloses an offence that requires further understanding, risk assessments and a bespoke plan could enable the applicant to be approved under Reg 26(8). The assessing social worker is required to provide analysis of why the applicant should be recommended for approval. In these instances, the assessing social worker will need to access legal advice.

Regulation 26(8) allows the fostering service to consider the approval or continuing suitability of a foster carer for a particular child, even though they would have been debarred by regulation 26(5) or (7), if they or a member of their household are related to the child, or they are already acting as a foster carer for the child, providing the responsible authority is satisfied that the [child's welfare requires it](#).

Health

Regulation 26(1A)(a) and Schedule 3 Part 1, para 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended) state that the assessment report must include details of the applicant/s health, supported by a medical report.

The applicant/s will complete the Adult Health questionnaire Form AH Part B. This is a self-reporting process requiring applicants to answer a series of questions. Once completed by prospective foster carers, it is sent to their GP; the GP completes a medical and the fostering service medical adviser then comments on it. Their comments can be set out in this section of Form F, or alternately as a letter or report in Section C. The assessor should ensure that the medical adviser's comments are provided in full, and they should not be summarised or interpreted (except by that medical adviser). Where the applicant has health issues, these require careful analysis in terms of what the implications might be for fostering.

It is good practice for the assessing social worker to see the completed Form AH, although this information must be handled with full adherence to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Adams (2017) provides detailed information about adult health assessments, including how the process should work using CoramBAAF Form AH and how to interpret the information that comes out of the health assessment. This should specifically address issues including obesity, treated cancer, blood-borne virus infection, mental health, and lifestyle issues such as smoking and alcohol use. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.

Home local authority check

Assessors need to make sure that checks are sent to the correct departments/ systems, which includes contacting adult social care teams as well as children's social care teams to ensure the correct record is checked.

Adams (2017) describes the process and practice issues around local authority checks, and assessors are expected to be familiar with that material.

Previous local authority checks – for the past 10 years

Checks need to be made with all the local authorities where the applicant/s previously raised children, no matter how many years ago. Local authorities receiving an information request will be governed by their internal policies and processes about which checks to make and how far back the check will go. The recommendation is that children's social care and adult social care systems are checked; in terms of how far back checks should go, they should address at least the period that covers the pregnancy and child until they reach their 18th birthday. Most local authorities will not keep child protection information for more than six years past the child's 18th birthday, so it is important to consider that no information doesn't always mean a clear check.

In some circumstances, a check with previous local authorities where applicants have lived will be necessary, and each fostering service should have a policy in this regard. Adams (2017) addresses these issues in detail, looking at both practice and policy issues, and assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.

Household accommodation

Regulation 26(1A)(a) and Schedule 3 Part 1, para 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended) require a description of the applicant/s accommodation, and this should be information that is relevant to the fostering task. This will include information about the general condition of the home that must be 'adequately furnished and decorated [and] maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene throughout' (NMS 10.2). It will also need to provide evidence that the foster home will be

able to ‘comfortably accommodate all who live there’ (NMS 10.1), being aware that in most circumstances ‘each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom’ (NMS 10.6).

The assessing social worker should paint a picture of the accommodation: how is the home accessed, describe the communal spaces, the location of all the bedrooms and bathrooms. Is there an outdoor space; is this a child-friendly space?

Former significant partners

Information about previous relationships is required under Regulation 26(2) and Schedule 3 Part 2 paras 14 and 15 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended). This information could be important in getting a sense of the applicant/s and their life experiences, but not necessarily. Where the applicant/s has co-parented any child/ren with an ex-partner, then in most cases (unless there was domestic abuse, see below) it will be important to speak with this person. It is essential that the assessing social worker holds in mind the impact on the applicant/s and their relationship with one another when ex-partners are being contacted. Sound and sensitive professional decisions must be applied.

In some instances, if the relationship was many years ago, it might be difficult for some ex-partners to be found. In these cases, family members and friends who were around at the time can confirm basic details and any relevant concerns there may have been about that relationship.

If there was a history of domestic abuse or any associated unsafe behaviour connected to the previous significant partner, the assessing social worker should not make contact with this person. The worker must always prioritise the safety and identifying information of the applicant. It might be appropriate to speak with a family member or friend to learn about this previous relationship; however, explicit consent should be provided by the applicant.

Section A: References

Personal references

When carrying out personal references, it is important to focus on a strengths-based model. A great deal of positive information can be gained from references, but this does rely on the quality of the questions being asked and whether there are other creative ways in which the referee can share positive life experiences and observations about the applicant. It is essential to think about the quality of information obtained from references rather than the number of references.

At least two people per applicant will be interviewed by the assessing social worker to provide a personal reference. The interview will include questions about the applicant/s suitability to foster, drawing out their experiences, skills and qualities that will enhance them becoming a foster carer. The referee will also be invited to describe any worries, concerns or areas the applicant/s may struggle with. One person can provide a reference for a couple; however, in order for this to be sufficient as one reference per applicant, the referee must know each applicant in the couple very well. If a referee writing a reference for a couple only knows one applicant a little, then an additional reference should be sought.

The key for personal references is for them to be provided by someone who has known the applicant personally for a long period of time, spending time in their home with their family, socialising and celebrating life events together as well as supporting each other during times of crisis or difficulty.

References are provided in confidence and not routinely shared with an applicant. The person providing the reference needs to state whether they would be happy for the applicant to read their reference if they make this formal request.

Under Regulation 26(1A)(c) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended), where an applicant has been a foster carer 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 oral or written references if they choose to do so.

Section A: Part Two

Verification of documents

When checking documents in this section, it is expected that the assessor is able to see the original documents rather than photocopies.

Court proceedings

Has the applicant been involved in any court proceedings? This includes ongoing and pending proceedings.

Has the applicant been involved in any family court proceedings or in any proceedings about children and/or family? Again, this needs to include ongoing and pending proceedings. Details of the nature of the proceedings, the date, name of court and type of order made (where applicable) should be included. Names of children concerned need to be recorded.

Current employment or volunteering

This section draws out skills, strengths, attributes and achievements that will enhance the care that the applicant/s can provide. Conversations about paid and unpaid work can be used to ascertain what applicants learned from their experiences. What have they found to be their unique qualities that enhance a team, project or task? How do they ask for help or support? Do they know when to stop working and take a break? What skills will aid them in the role of foster carer?

Increasingly, employers are producing very brief employee references, sometimes referred to as “tombstone references”. These may only contain the dates that the employee worked for the organisation. When this happens, it is suggested that the assessor follows up with a call/email to an employer to elicit more information. Failing that, the assessor should seek to speak to a work colleague; recording the conversation will suffice.

The assessing social worker can discuss with the applicant/s whether the current employer/s will be supportive of them fostering. The extent to which an employer is supportive should feature in the employment reference.

Detailed consideration of the impact of employment or occupation, especially around time available for fostering, will be considered in Section B.

Most fostering services will require that current employers should be contacted to confirm the information given by the applicant/s about their employment, and to gather evidence regarding their suitability to foster.

Where applicants do voluntary work, this should be considered in the same way as paid employment. Each fostering service should have a policy about requirements in relation to undertaking employer checks.

Adams (2017) addresses practice and policy in relation to employer references, and assessors are expected to be familiar with that material. CoramBAAF also publishes an employment and voluntary activity form that is available to those who hold the licence for Form F.

Previous employment or volunteering involving children or vulnerable adults

History of employment is required under Regulation 26(2) and Schedule 3 Part 2 paras 14 and 15 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended). This information is important in getting a sense of the applicant/s and their life experiences.

Fostering services will recognise the benefit of contacting previous employers where an applicant was working with children or vulnerable adults, to ensure that there were no safety or protection concerns, and to gather positive evidence regarding their suitability to foster.

Adams (2017) covers this issue offering advice in relation to policy and practice. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material, and fostering services will need to have a policy setting out their practice in this regard. CoramBAAF also publishes an employment and voluntary activity form that is available to those who hold the licence for Form F.

Household finance

The assessing social worker will complete the financial assessment/financial statement with the applicant/s, will look at income and expenditure, and will also need to discuss any debt, in relation to exploring the applicant/s finances and specifically understanding how debt is being managed and reduced (if this is an issue).

In the section further on in the assessment 'Regular Commitments, Finances and Analysis', there is opportunity to examine finances within the household and to consider the implications for fostering. This should be recorded in detail with reference to discussions, evidence and analysis.

Pets and animals

All the pets and animals living inside the home and in the garden/outside space of the household need to be assessed. The main considerations are how the pets/animals might benefit this prospective fostering household, and how the pets/animals may present risks or health and safety considerations. Discussions should include the potential for a child to be allergic to or scared of a pet/animal. Some religions do not allow people following that faith to live with certain pets and animals. Some children in care might want to bring their own pet with them, and for other children, the possibility of being able to have their own pet will be very important to them.

Social media and internet checks

Assessing social workers need to explain to applicants what searches they will be carrying out, and why.

It is important to discuss how families will adapt their social media use when they start to foster. This might be about adding privacy settings, changing identifying usernames and restricting access to accounts/website pages. Applicants will need a thorough understanding of the need to protect the

identity of the child/ren they care for and themselves. It is also important to discuss where applicants can access support for safeguarding children online.

School, nursery and health visitor checks

These are required for applicant/s children who are attending a school, nursery or with an allocated health visitor. If a child is about to transition, for example, from nursery to primary school or primary school to secondary school, it would be important to contact the school where the child is moving on from. These checks are to ascertain if there have been any concerns raised about the applicant/s as the parent/carer; these are not checks about the children.

Adams (2017) provides detailed good practice guidance around seeking references from schools, nurseries and health visitors. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material, and fostering services are expected to have policies setting out their practice in this regard. CoramBAAF also publishes a school and nursery reference form that is available to those who hold the licence for Form F.

Other checks

This is a space in which to record the outcomes of other checks, for example with CAMHS and Ofsted, according to local policy.

Section B: Part One

About the applicant/s

A strengths-based approach is a way of working that is about examining an individual's positive qualities and attributes. This will involve examining how resourceful the applicant is, how they can show where they have drawn on their ability to be resilient, and where they have exercised their self-determination. The assessment should not be about trying to "catch people out" or "trip people up". Instead, this is a collaborative process that requires professional trust to be built and for there to be room for the applicant/s to be honest with the assessor. The assessor should understand challenges and difficulties that the applicant/s has or is experiencing if these might impact on their fostering.

This approach does not diminish the fact that this section provides the panel and agency decision-maker with the information needed to see whether the applicant/s is suitable for the complex and demanding role of fostering. Through the discussions, the applicant might decide for themselves that they are unsure about fostering.

1. Motivations and reasons for fostering

2. Strengths, passions, likes, challenges. Identity.

Analysis

It is essential in considering applicant suitability to understand their motivation for fostering; what do they hope to get out of it? The assessor will need to be clear about why the applicant/s have applied at this particular time, and how this has been considered in relation to all household members.

Motivation needs to be explicitly stated to provide a context for other information in the report, and in order to consider whether plans are realistic.

If the only or main motivation for applying to be a foster carer is the financial gains, this would be problematic. However, applicant/s need to be able to discuss finances without feeling judged by the assessing social worker. It is important to be careful before concluding that someone is financially motivated. Financial reasons alone would be a concerning motivation; however, the choice of a “career” in foster care as an alternative to other paid employment is entirely legitimate, so long as other positive factors are also present.

In this section, the assessor should also be thinking with the applicant/s about how fostering might impact on their current lifestyle; what might need to change, and how any changes will need to be managed. It is about trying to make sure the applicant/s are as prepared as they can be for what is generally recognised to be a significant challenge. These discussions are also important in helping the assessor to check that the applicant/s are realistic about fostering and have a full understanding of how this will impact on them.

Applicants will need to describe and also demonstrate their ability to provide a high standard of care to children which promotes healthy emotional, physical, sexual and intellectual development.

What does the family like doing, how do they celebrate, how do they have fun, do they go on day trips and what do these look like, do they take holidays – what do these look like, do they regularly visit family and friends, are they active and what does this look like, are they creative and artistic, do they support a sports team – how do they do this? How does this family ‘live their best lives’? What do they do to cheer themselves up? How do they include all members of the family to feel engaged and involved? Assessing social workers need to be able to imagine how it would feel to be a child living with this family.

Applicants may need support in describing their own identity. A good starting point is for the assessing social worker to describe some elements of their own identity that they feel comfortable sharing. Applicants should reflect on shared and differing identities within their family. This will help applicants consider how it might feel like to be a child in this fostering family, each with their own unique and potentially very different identity, and how overwhelming this might feel for a child.

Thinking about the elements of each applicant’s identity and what these meant for the applicant as a child, an adolescent and as an adult is an essential part of the assessment process. Here, the assessing social worker should explore holistically the identity of the applicant/s, and how these elements of their being have shaped them as a person, e.g. ethnicity, ethnic heritage, gender, sexual orientation, disability, neurodiversity, care experienced, adopted, parent. What does this mean for them – what strengths do they have as part of their unique identity, and what could this mean for the children in their care? How have these distinctive lived experiences brought them to their decision to want to become a foster carer?

3. Current relationship or not in a relationship

4. How you live – a typical week

5. Everyone in the home

Analysis

Regulation 26(2) and Schedule 3 Part 2 paras 1, 15 and 16 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended) state that the assessment must provide details of the applicant/s personality and current relationship. The assessing social worker will be forming views about the type of person the applicant/s is and their character. This view is based on the applicant’s self-reporting, views of their partner if they

have one, views of birth children and other children living in the household, and from the range of references and other information available. It will be important to check that a consistent picture is emerging from all these sources and to explore any areas where different views are shared or observed.

If the applicant is not in a relationship at the moment, the assessing social worker can explore this with them and help them consider, if their relationship status were to change, what impact this could have on their fostering.

Assessing social workers will need to understand the regular rhythms and routines that occur in the household. Is there one day that a special meal always happens; is this moveable? Does the family spend time each week doing an activity together, attending a religious service, having a games evening? Do members of the family take it in turns to cook meals? How does the family relax and have downtime; what does this look like? What are the busy times of the day/week, and what do these feel like? Some assessing social workers use a weekly schedule or planning grid with applicants as a way to view a typical week in the life of the applicant/s and the other members of the household.

This refers to everyone living in the house, including lodgers and foreign exchange students. Who lives here, and who regularly stays over? Applicants should include other close family members living outside of their household. People considered as close family need to be included, as well as people not considered as close family but who need to be known about, e.g. estranged parents or best friends who will provide an “auntie” or “uncle” figure for a child being cared for.

6. Family history and childhood

7. Adult life experiences

8. Previous significant relationships

9. Family not living in the home

Analysis

The assessing social worker does not need to hear every detail about the applicant/s childhood and family history. They do, however, need to hear about the key events, milestones, successes and heartaches that have shaped them as an individual and also impacted on how they live their life now. Applicants will need to reflect on the significant events from their own family history and childhood and how these events might influence their emotional reactions. Depending on numerous elements experienced by the child the applicants might feel that they will be more understanding or less emotionally available. The assessing social worker needs to enable a conversation where the applicant can imagine how they might respond.

Family trees provide a readily accessible picture of current family relationships and significant members of the family over generations and can help assessors to explore family patterns and dynamics. In social work, the tool used to record a family network is often referred to as a genogram. This uses a series of symbols and is different from a family tree. They provide an important focus for understanding the impact of the past on the present and the way that separations, losses, transitions and trauma have been a part of the applicant/s life experience.

The completion of a genogram is a well-established part of the assessment, not just for the information it contains, but for the opportunity it provides for applicants to discuss the significance of people and

events in their lives. The applicant/s readiness to engage in completing their genogram in an open and reflective manner will provide valuable insights.

An ecomap is used to represent in a picture format the applicant/s, their immediate family and the connections that they have with others in their community. Ecomaps are drawn by placing the family household at the centre of the drawing and then enclosing this in a circle. Individuals then identify the people with whom they have relationships outside of the household; this should include groups or organisations in the community that are of significance. Assessors need to be clear that although an ecomap might be included as evidence with Section C, it is primarily a tool to aid discussion and reflection. For more information about constructing an ecomap, see Chapman (2017).

In this section, applicants are encouraged to think about their significant and memorable life experiences; how did these impact on them? How did the way they responded to these experiences help them develop and which of these events have shaped the individual to where they are now in relation to being ready to foster? Applicants who have experienced loss might be able to describe how the way they worked through these emotions for themselves and supported people close to them has increased their emotional resilience.

Does the applicant drive? Do they have access to a car, all the time, sometimes or rarely? How will this impact a child needing to be transported to spend time with birth parents/siblings/dance class/football training? Which methods of public transport are nearby, which public transport methods do the applicant/s use? If the applicant/s does not use public transport, how will they get the child to an appointment or activity in the event that using a car is not an option?

How does the applicant/s access key services which a child in care might need to get to: leisure centre/gyms, library, arts centre, theatre, cinema, bowling alley, climbing wall, skate park?

How do the applicant/s make themselves feel better? And how will this help with being emotionally available to a child, especially on their tougher days? What do the applicant/s enjoy doing together as a family and how could a child join in with this? What do the applicant/s do when they've had a difficult time to help them to feel better?

How are guests welcomed into the home; what does this look like? How would the family dynamic be described by each person living in the home? What are the house rules, e.g. shoes off at the door, a chores rota, etc?

Discussing previous significant relationships will require sensitive and empathetic exploration from the assessing social worker. The place and timing of this discussion will be important to consider. Rather than the applicant having to share details leading up to why a relationship ended, the important thing to establish is how did the applicant recover from the ending of the relationship. Did they use their family, friends and wider social network for support, distraction or whatever it was they needed to work through their emotions?

Applicants should describe people in their close family and children (including step-children and children parented/cared for) that are very important to them who live elsewhere. The assessor will need to develop an understanding of how these relationships are maintained and enabled to flourish, where feasible and appropriate. Reflecting on these relationships provides an important opportunity for the applicant to walk in the shoes of a child in care, who will most likely need support to preserve similar relationships, where safe to do so.

10. Education

11. Regular commitments

12. Social health

13. Training and development

Analysis

Within this section, it is important to consider the applicant/s experience of school and education, and to ascertain their views about how this has impacted on their life chances, opportunities and associated decisions. It will be necessary to discuss this in the context of how the applicant/s might support any fostered children in school, how they will be ambitious for every child and how they might promote a positive learning experience.

In this section, the assessing social worker is gaining insights into each applicant in relation to their employment commitments, volunteering and other regular commitments, e.g. caring for elderly parents elsewhere, taking neighbours to their weekly supermarket shop. This section requires discussion about these roles and whether they will continue post-approval, reduce or end. The section also requires an exploration of caring responsibilities. This should include caring responsibilities for family, for example, parents with mobility needs or relatives with additional needs.

Sometimes individuals do not describe the jobs and support they regularly provide to someone else as a caring role. The definition is not the key point here – what is important to understand is the frequency of these tasks and potential impact that fostering might have on the applicant/s being able to fulfil the support they currently provide. Thinking about ways to address any possible impact fostering will have will be supportive for the applicant/s. This also provides a reflective opportunity for the applicant/s to consider the impact of fostering on existing daily/weekly tasks.

Social health encompasses friendships, community activity, neighbours, work colleagues, club membership (e.g sport, arts, music), religious and faith groups or communities, volunteering and more. It will be important for applicants to map out their social networks, and to imagine where they might need to utilise these connections once approved as a foster carer, and realistically recognise which connections might be harder to sustain.

Applicant/s are required to attend Skills to Foster training (The Fostering Network) or equivalent preparation training as part of their assessment process. This training is essential as it provides an opportunity for the applicant/s to understand more about the role and expectations, and to be honest about whether they have the capacity to provide therapeutic parenting and whether now is the right time to foster, for them and the other members of their family.

It is also necessary to consider how the applicant/s engaged in the preparation training, and how they responded to the challenge of the assessment process, including their ability to complete set tasks, and to reflect on feedback when provided.

Prospective foster carers are not expected to have all the skills, experiences, knowledge and training required for the fostering role; therefore, it is important for gaps to be mapped out. Training and development opportunities that can address gaps should be discussed openly and a supportive action plan created. This should be recorded in the individual's training plans.

14. Household finances

Analysis

Discussing finances with applicants requires tactful and curious practice from assessing social workers, as this is one area of people's lives that tends to remain private and applicant/s may not openly discuss their finances with close family and friends. The role of the assessing social worker is to ascertain who in the household organises the income and outgoings – is this one person's responsibility or shared? Who is responsible for paying the bills and is this understood by both applicants? Who monitors the bank accounts? Do the applicants have shared bank accounts, separate bank accounts or both? Do they use spreadsheets or different budgeting methods? Do the applicant/s have debt? Who is responsible for paying back the debt?

The importance of fully considering debt was highlighted by the death of Leiland-James Michael Corkill in January 2021. He was murdered by one of his prospective adopters and the safeguarding review identified the high level of debt as a stress factor within the household.

The CoramBAAF financial assessment form (November 2022) has been updated to include the total amount of household debt rather than just the monthly repayments, as previously recorded. However, all of these forms are "tools" to aid assessment, and the information should be discussed in the context of the whole assessment, including potential family stress, dynamics and decision-making. The sources of verification of the information contained therein should be considered and detailed to enable triangulation of information ([CoramBAAF, 2023](#)).

Overall analysis

This section draws out the summary of views and judgements that the assessing social worker has made throughout the assessment period. This section should not repeat previous analysis sections. This section can be written as bullet points or as an outline of the significant key themes or issues. It should not introduce new information that has not been included elsewhere. It can include the applicant/s views.

Section B: Part Two – What does the child need?

This section provides an opportunity for applicants to think deeply about the extensive needs of a child and the responsibilities of foster carers to support and nurture them. Discussions during this part of the assessment will be predominantly child focused; however, in order for an applicant to make sense of what they are considering, it might be helpful to firstly think about themselves, particularly when considering identity. The assessor will have developed an understanding of the applicant's identity, but these discussions can allow for further exploration.

The guidance for this part of the assessment includes suggested questions, themes for discussion and examples of resources that will work alongside some of the statements in the 'What does the child need?' sections. The questions and resources are offered as a guide and not exhaustive. The assessing social worker can use the example supplementary questions or develop their own depending on the knowledge and experience of the applicant. The assessing social worker and fostering service will have tools, resources and effective methods embedded in practice that enhance the assessment of applicants - these should continue to be used.

The following guidance provides one case study under each of the four statement categories: Identity and relationships; Advocacy and empowerment; Being part of a foster family; Strengthening and building resilience. These can be used by the assessing social worker to consider the types of experiences and possible needs of a child. We have included case studies as tools that can be used by assessing social workers to bring to life some of the issues and complexities being explored in this section. The case studies are designed to facilitate a discussion, allowing the applicant/s to respond to and explore the individual needs of the child. There are no set right answers here, so long as the assessing social worker is confident the applicant/s have shown sufficient consideration of a child in care's needs and demonstrated an ability and willingness to meet them.

These case studies are examples and do not have to be used. The assessing social worker can use their discretion to adapt or replace these with alternative case studies and to inform their analysis of the applicant/s capacity to care for a child, as well as where they may require additional training or support.

Identity and relationships – introduction

Identity can mean different things to different people. It might be about who you hang out with, what music you listen to, where you live or what ethnicity you are. Simply put – your identity is “who you are”.

The Children's Society (2025)

For applicants less confident in this area, it helps to start by asking how they describe all the parts of their own identity. The assessor can reveal origins, elements and characteristics of their own identity to open up the conversation. Once the applicant has a solid understanding of their own identity, the assessor can progress to discuss how they might support the elements of identity for a child.

The assessor should explore resources that will help the applicant/s increase their understanding of identity, e.g. TED talks, recent publications, social media platforms and websites. The assessor should check the content and sources and discuss with the applicant/s which resources they will read/view/listen to. Once completed, the assessor should ensure there is time for a reflective discussion.

There will be experiences that are familiar to the child which promote their cultural background and help them understand who they are so that they are able to gain a better sense of themselves. Foster carers need to expand their knowledge and be open to experiencing different cultures. For example, a foster carer may need to source ingredients, recipes and advice for cooking a meal that reflects the cultural heritage of the child they are caring for. It might be the case that a child has dietary restrictions or preferences relating to cultural or religious beliefs. The applicants could explore with the assessing social worker how they would celebrate different cultural festivals and holidays with a child.

Identity and relationships – child statements

The following sections are numbered to correspond with the numbered statements on the form.

- 1. I need all aspects of my identity to be understood, respected and celebrated so that I can feel proud of who I am.**

It is crucial that the assessing social worker allows for all aspects of the applicant/s identity to be discussed and understood including their ethnicity, ethnic heritage, culture, language, religion, gender and sexual orientation. This discussion should evolve so that the applicant/s can envisage how they will be able to respond to and promote the unique elements of a child's identity.

Applicants need to see that there is a strong link between understanding identity and how this relates to maintaining familial relationships.

Below are some suggested questions that the assessing social worker can ask the applicant/s if a child's race, religion or culture is different to that of the applicant/s:

- How will the child's faith needs be met on a daily basis?
- If a child wanted to go to church/temple/mosque/synagogue/temple with a carer who did not practice the same religious belief, would they be able to meet these needs?
- If a child did not want to go to church/mosque/synagogue/temple with a carer, is there an option for them to remain at home or do something different with someone else within the family or network?
- How would they accommodate specific dietary needs? Would they cook Halal prepared meat or vegetarian dishes?
- Can they describe when they have respected or celebrated an occasion that was not part of their own culture? How did it feel, what did they learn about themselves?
- Can they describe when they have experienced or witnessed discrimination? (Racism, LGBT+ phobia, ableism, misogyny etc.) What did they do? How did it make them feel? Have they ever called out discriminatory behaviour? Would they do something differently next time? Are there people or places they feel comfortable going to in their community to get support, advice, or connection?
- Have they had conversations with children/young people about healthy relationships, consent and contraception (age-appropriate and culturally sensitive)? Can they share how this felt?
- How will they care for a Black child or young person whose ethnic origin is either African, Caribbean or mixed race with African or Caribbean Heritage? They will need specific skin and hair care – do they know where to get support with this?

If an applicant is unclear about micro-aggressions and biases, the assessing social worker can share an appropriate video link. (See tools section at end of guidance for ideas).

2. I need to have my memories respected, recognised and kept alive; to include family, friends, carers and those important to me.

Even if the child doesn't ask, it is essential that the adults caring for them keep their memories alive. This may involve gathering and looking at photos, videos and other objects. There are many ways in which memories are formed, and foster carers should be creative in how these are cultivated and looked after. They are also required to be the safe keepers of these memories.

This will depend on where the applicants are in their journey, exploring experiences they have had of supporting children who are not their own.

Supporting carers to understand that the child's previous life is not lost or forgotten about is crucial. It is important that applicants are equipped to support a child to maintain strong connectivity to their

family. Often children in care feel part of two families, which can be hard to navigate. They will require their foster carers to proactively support them as they make sense of this.

It can be helpful to look at what the applicants do as a family – how they keep all the important people “alive” within their family and how they might be able to do this for a child in their care.

The assessor should help applicants understand that children in care often move around and so it will be particularly important for them to make an active effort to capture memories for children, and ensure children have these memories to take with them when they move on from their care.

3. I need you to support me to keep connected to past, present and future relationships and to be creative in how we do this.

Staying connected to people who are important to the child: applicants will require creative ideas to undertake this. Foster carers have to be willing to support children to keep meaningful relationships. Foster carers will likely need to be supported to be open to help foster children manage friendships and connections with their family members. Even if the relationship doesn’t exist anymore, a child can still be connected to it.

Enabling children to spend time with important people in their lives might be in person, digitally or via other ways of connecting. Applicants should be helped to understand how they feel they would be able to promote different types of connection for a child and explore other relationships that might not be easy but require patience, sensitivity, nurture and finding common ground.

4. I need to be able to see my brothers and sisters. I need to see my friends and other children who are important to me.

Spending time with brothers and sisters is vital to a child’s identity, self-esteem, sense of self and family membership. Children and young people also need to be able to see their friends. Logistics to make these arrangements may present challenges; however, the foster carer will need to work out solutions with the child’s social worker and their supervising social worker.

They will need to be creative when thinking about venues that would promote fun and allow them to create memories. Sterile environments do not provide positive places for play, joy and relaxation.

Relationship difficulties can be explored in this section. How does the applicant think they will help a child who might feel stuck after a challenging/unsafe experience with someone in their family? This support will need to be age-appropriate.

5. I need you to learn and respect my specific needs. The way I think, feel and do may not be the same as you, but it is who I am and it matters to me.

The differences between individual children in terms of their needs, behaviours and expression of feelings should be talked about, understood and acknowledged positively.

This statement encourages the applicant/s to think about children who have experienced neglect and/or abuse specifically and that they all require trauma-informed care. Essentially, the unique needs, behaviours and expressed feelings and emotions need to be responded to through a lens that is sensitive, empathic, nurturing and patient.

6. I need you to accept my family. They are part of my identity so, if you can, I need you to build positive relationships with them.

Maintaining relationships with family members is key for the child to make sense of who they are, where they come from, and their identity, especially in respect of ethnicity, culture, language, religion, likes and dislikes. Promoting, maintaining and affording time to keep these relationships active requires specific skills from foster carers. The safety of the child is always paramount and has to be central when making plans to spend time with family members. In some instances, it will not be within the foster carer's gift to maintain a relationship with an individual family member. In these cases, the child will need to understand why, in age-appropriate language.

7. I need you to help me learn about my life story.

Applicants will need to understand the importance of life story work and that a child's life story needs to be added to irrespective of the length of time they are living with foster carers. Assessing social workers must explain what life story work actually is, and the many different forms it can take. These records are precious and need to be kept safe, so they are not lost or damaged. Equally, children benefit from being able to interact with their life story materials.

CASE STUDY – Hamza is aged 7.

Hamza's mother is White British and his father is Algerian. He has two older siblings (aged 14 and 16) who live with their grandparents. He came into care due to issues with his mother's poor mental health and his father's repeated absences from their home. Hamza does not understand why he cannot stay with his parents or live with his grandparents. Hamza has trouble sleeping as he has nightmares. He is a little behind his peers with his reading and writing. Hamza has a healthy appetite and would eat ice-cream every day if he could. Hamza mostly enjoys school but gets upset when he thinks teachers think he doesn't try. He has heard some children call him names but does have a best friend who he likes to play football with every break time. Hamza enjoys watching his older brothers play football. He plays cricket at a school club and he loves to dance.

Questions/themes for assessing social worker to explore with applicant

- What aspects of his identity need to be understood and respected?
- How can Hamza's family identity be celebrated?
- How will you ensure memories of his family are visible/ accessible if he is no longer going to see them as much?
- How will you keep him connected to his past, present and future relationships? Think about his siblings.
- How will you help him see his family and friends?
- How will you learn about his specific needs?
- You have been upset about how he cannot live with his grandparents. How will you show him you accept them and maintain positive relationships with them?
- How will you help him learn about his life story?

Advocacy and empowerment - introduction

The child's views are important and foster carers should talk to them about what they value, their likes, dislikes and wishes for their future. This will need to be done in an age-appropriate way. The key message is that advocacy and empowerment are not about making assumptions about a child's views, feelings and wishes. The foster carer needs to actively listen to the child and additionally pay attention to anything a child might not feel able or confident to ask for. The foster carer role can be hugely significant in accessing the appropriate services and support for the child. This requires assertiveness, patience and being a capable communicator.

Advocacy and empowerment – child statements

The following sections are numbered to correspond with the numbered statements on the form.

8. I need you to empower/help/support me to make my own voice heard. If I need you to, advocate on my behalf so that my voice is heard.

Amplifying the child's voice is another essential part of being a foster carer. This is relevant regardless of the child's age, stage or cognitive development. Before foster carers can help a child to have their voice heard, they need to listen to them carefully. There will be some things in their lives that are more important to them than others, and their priorities may not align with those of the foster carer/teacher/social worker/parent, etc. It takes time and patience to build trust and this may be tested by the child. The assessing social worker should enable discussion where the applicant can share examples where they have advocated for someone in the family, network, in a work or volunteering capacity and what skills they used or needed to do this successfully.

9. I need you to challenge discrimination and prejudice in any circumstances and to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

This statement requires a discussion to understand how the applicant will challenge prejudice and discrimination in any circumstances. The assessing social worker will need to explore how the applicant would respond to various scenarios – for example, if a child comes home from school and describes racist abuse from another child; a child expresses homophobic views; a fostered child's parent dismisses the child's additional needs; or a young person reveals that they witnessed a girl being made to feel uncomfortable by some of their male friends. Any type of discrimination and prejudice needs to be challenged. The assessing worker should explore with the applicant times in their life when they have challenged discrimination, and times when they wish they had challenged it. What could they do differently in future so that they feel equipped to challenge?

10. If I have a disability, am neurodivergent or have additional needs, I need you to challenge or advocate on my behalf to ensure I get the support I need.

If in the future the applicant looks after a fostered child who has a disability and/or is neurodivergent, they will need to invest the time to understand what this means for the child and what adjustments should be made to the foster home and other places the child accesses. It is important not to make any assumptions about a condition, need or disability. Can the applicant describe an occasion when they have had to learn about a new condition and then support the individual to access a service or equivalent? The case studies along with the tools and resources section can be used here if the applicant needs to acquire knowledge in this area.

11. I need encouragement to reach my full potential.

Foster carers should always be ambitious and aspirational for every child and young person they care for. This applies to academic and vocational potential, but also to potential in all other areas of a child's life. Foster carers need to carefully listen to the child's wishes and hopes and magnify these wherever feasible. If a teacher or another adult is not ambitious about the child's future, this should always be challenged. Applicants should be encouraged to reflect on how they have been ambitious and aspirational for themselves and how they have been ambitious and aspirational for others in their lives to date. How did they express this ambition?

12. I need you to work as part of a team to ensure my needs are met.

Working as part of the team around the child is a key requirement of being a foster carer. The assessing social worker will need to explain that this is not always an easy space or role to occupy, especially as there can be differences of opinions within these networks. These dynamics are similar to many work/volunteering settings - the applicant could describe an experience of being part of a team where they held a different view to the majority.

13. I need you to take an interest in what happens to me at school/college. I need you to work with staff to access support for me.

Education will be a significant part of any child's life. This requires tenacity on the part of foster carers to ensure they are provided with all the information they need. They should be invited to relevant meetings to discuss the child's education plan, progress and areas needing extra support. They should also advocate for resources that will enhance the child's experience of education, including the school/college extra-curricular offer. Using the case study below or a different example how would the applicant access appropriate educational support for the child?

14. I might need support to access independent advocacy/specialist advice from a lawyer.

Some children in care require access to advocacy/specialist advice from a lawyer – assessing social workers will need to discuss with the applicant how they might go about supporting a child/young person who does require this.

15. I need you to recognise the challenges I may face because I am not living with my family.

A child not living with their family (regardless of the circumstances as to why they are in care) will be upsetting, and the situation will potentially evoke feelings of acute distress and anxiety in the child. These feelings need to be respected by foster carers, and the child provided with sensitive care and nurturing that recognises these strong emotions. Assessing social workers should support applicants to develop empathy towards this lived reality for the majority of children in care. Using the case studies can help applicant/s imagine the complex range of feelings and responses of being connected to two families.

CASE STUDY - Kenise is 15 years old.

Kenise's mother is Black Jamaican and her father is White British. Kenise is in foster care as both her parents have substance misuse issues. She has experienced severe neglect for most of her life and has low self-confidence. At times she can be very anxious in new situations or around new people. Kenise has dyslexia, processing information and concentrating for long periods of time can be tough for her.

School has mainly been a place where she feels she can be herself and has benefited from extra support in some of her lessons. Kenise talks to her form tutor when her mental health is compromised. Kenise is often described as shy, although her form tutor has noticed her chatting with two students recently who are vocal about social issues. More recently Kenise has been wondering about her gender identity. She has connected with people online who are also exploring their gender identity.

Questions/ themes for assessing social worker to explore with applicant

- What type of services/ support might be helpful for her?
- Who will you connect with in school?
- Is school the best place for emotional support/ talking therapy to be provided?
- When will it be the right time for Kenise to use her own voice and when will be the right time to advocate for her?
- How will you ensure school continue to meet her learning needs?
- How can you help her to reach her full potential?

Being part of a foster family - introduction

When a child moves in with a foster family they will experience a range of emotions including fear, confusion, excitement, sadness, loss, relief, worry and curiosity. Foster carers will need to try and predict what the child might experience and what they might be able to do to support them. The assessing worker should explain that this is not about suppressing emotions but instead walking in the child's shoes and anticipating what adjustments might help them to feel welcomed, accepted, safe and understood.

Each and every child needs to feel and hear that they are loved and wanted to enable them to thrive. They need consistent loving relationships, overflowing with warmth, hugs, reassurance and praise.

Protective Care is how we support children to feel safe whilst they are learning that most adults, including foster carers, will love and protect them. Protective care is about making changes for everyone in the fostering household to help the child to build an understanding of everyone's behaviour and feels safe in their new environment. It is also about protecting children whilst they learn new norms and overcome trauma. Protective Care recommends the creation of three plans Fostering Family Protective Care Plan, Child's Protective Care Plan, Foster Carer Plan in case of Allegation. These replace the Safer Caring Plan. (The Fostering Network, 2025).

Being part of a foster family – child statements

The following sections are numbered to correspond with the numbered statements on the form.

16. I need to feel safe in your home.

Feeling safe in the foster family home is one of the most essential things a child will need and without the feeling of being kept safe a child cannot thrive. By putting themselves in the child's shoes, applicants should consider how it might feel to experience their home, both for the first time and throughout their time in the foster family. Feeling safe can be achieved in different ways and this discussion can start by exploring the ways in which the applicant themselves experiences feeling safe.

17. I need to be kept safe when you are caring for me, wherever we are.

'Wherever we are' – children will need to experience a feeling of being kept safe when they are away from the foster home. How will this sense of safety be understood by a child? For example, this can be achieved through giving a child an object to take care of whilst they are at school or attending other activities.

18. I need to feel welcome in your home and for you to help me feel included and accepted.

Helping a child to feel welcomed into a foster carer's home is crucial when the child first moves in but also needs to be considered throughout the time they live there. Will the applicants be happy to put up photos of the child alongside other family photos on the fridge/sitting room walls?

19. I need to be treated as an individual and be offered the same opportunities and experiences as other children in the home.

The assessing social worker can get the applicants to think about how it might feel to parent their own children alongside a child in their care if this is applicable or caring for more than one child in their care. The key learning for applicant/s is that the child in care should be offered the same or equivalent opportunities to all other children living in the household. Extra-curricular activities and holidays are key examples which can be discussed in a context of fairness whilst acknowledging the reality that some activities/ hobbies require greater commitment, resources and time

20. I need you to help me feel accepted as part of your network of family and friends.

Being part of the carer's family and friends network will vary according to the fostering household; one example is being invited to parties and special occasions. The assessing social worker should discuss with the applicant how their support network can welcome the child and care for them as part of the applicant/s network of family and friends. The assessing social worker and applicant should robustly examine the likelihood of relationships within the network withstanding some of the challenges encountered when caring for a child. Often family and friends may express a wish to actively support a foster child and the foster carers, however, the reality can look very different. When the applicant/s children have sleepovers with grandparents or family members (if applicable), a fostered child needs to be able to go too, to know they belong and are an equal in the home.

21. I need you to teach me life skills and help me become more independent.

All children need to be taught life skills and provided with opportunities to develop their independence in line with their age, stage and cognitive abilities. It might take longer for these skills to be learnt and embedded for fostered children compared to their non-care-experienced peers; this can require a great deal of patience and positivity from foster carers. Applicant/s can think about how independent skills differ according to age and stage for a child - the case studies can bring this to life.

22. I want to be able to attend activities outside of school like my friends do.

The assessing social worker could use this statement to contemplate with applicant/s that they might need to gain permission to take a child to an activity outside of school or on holiday as an alternative example. Children in care should be able to join activities outside of school with friends and also try out new experiences, however, this is not always straightforward for a foster carer to plan and set up so it is helpful to discuss this here.

23. I need to play, have fun and experience joy.

All children should have opportunities for play, fun and the chance to experience joy. Foster carers need to build these elements into the child's life as frequently as they can. For applicants who have not parented / cared for children they could think about each of the children in the case studies and how they would support or make opportunities for joy, fun and playing.

24. I need to feel included in decisions about me, and where I live.

Foster carers, alongside the child's social worker, have to ensure (wherever appropriate) that the child/young person feels included and informed about decisions being made about them. This applies to where a child is living and might require foster carers to advocate on behalf of the child's views.

25. When I am the right age, I need help to safely connect online and access the internet.

Foster carers need to be informed about the benefits and serious risks of accessing the online world. A significant amount of socialising for young people is via digital social media platforms and apps. Foster carers need to be knowledgeable on supporting a child/young person to have age-appropriate access to the digital world and to safely connect with people online. This can feel daunting for applicants so it might be helpful to share that fostering services should provide training for foster carers in this area. This statement allows for applicant/s to share their views on children and young people having access to online and digital content.

CASE STUDY - Sophie is aged 10.

Sophie has a diagnosis of autism and attends a school for children with autism and other special needs. Her parents had a baby two years ago and felt they could not manage her behaviours at home. Sophie feels rejected by her parents. This is the fourth foster family Sophie has lived with in the last 18 months. She tends to attach strongly to new people, sharing information about herself and her family. She is most happy when she can be with her friends at the weekly band practice at school and the local drama club she goes to where she loves being around the older kids. Sophie can be impulsive and will wander off from the environment when she sees something that interests her. On a number of occasions she has run away from a situation she finds stressful or frightening. Sophie likes to know her routine and transitions, including getting in the car to go to school, sometimes unsettles her.

Questions/ themes for assessing social worker to explore with applicant

- How will you keep Sophie safe inside and outside the home?
- How will you make Sophie feel welcome, included and accepted?
- As Sophie has her own different needs how will you treat her as individual and make sure she has the opportunity to do things her peers experience?
- How will you introduce Sophie to your family and friends and help her feel accepted by them?
- What skills do you think Sophie would need to learn to help build her independence?
- How will you make sure Sophie takes part in activities and can play and have fun safely?
- How will you keep Sophie safe online?

Strengthening and building resilience - introduction

Children in care are often described as resilient, but it is important not to make this assumption nor place this expectation on a child. A child may present as resilient in school, for example, but then find it incredibly hard to regulate difficult emotions at home or in other non-school environments. Applicants will need to be prepared to develop their knowledge, responses, skills and patience so that they can provide emotionally attuned, sensitive and consistently warm care for a child. Essentially a key part of fostering is to ensure that a child has everything they need to be able to thrive.

Strengthening and building resilience – child statements

The following sections are numbered to correspond with the numbered statements on the form.

26. I need support in all areas of my wellbeing.

Wellbeing covers mental health, emotional wellbeing and opportunities for social health. The assessing social worker should explore with the applicant how they think they would know that a child was struggling and what they might do to get the right kind of help. It will be important for them to think about the possible age and abilities of a child, e.g. is English the child's first language?

27. I need you to understand and accept that I will need help to manage my emotions and behaviours.

A significant part of being a foster carer is supporting a child to manage emotions and associated behaviours which will vary significantly according to age, stage and cognitive understanding. Children in care should be given the chance to thrive and this can occur if the care provided is compassionate, sensitive, consistent and patient. Maintaining this trauma-informed parenting relies on foster carers developing their knowledge and skills. There are different training and resources available that applicants and approved foster carers should be encouraged to access to develop their knowledge and skills to provide trauma-informed parenting and therapeutic parenting.

28. I need you to notice and understand my strengths as well as my needs.

All children and young people have strengths that need to be noticed, understood and celebrated. Foster carers should ensure that they observe children doing things right and mark these moments, however small. Noticing and where feasible celebrating achievements creates opportunities for children to be viewed positively. It is essential for children in care to experience this authentic feedback. Assessing social workers can encourage applicants to use the case study examples to imagine where they might be able to notice and celebrate strengths. Equally identifying areas where a child is struggling is important and should be done with kindness and understanding.

29. I want to keep and repair relationships. I might need extra help doing this.

Keeping and repairing relationships requires effort, time, energy, tenacity, negotiation and learning how to say 'sorry'. Foster carers will need to model this behaviour and so will other members of the fostering household. When things do not go so well, foster carers can be honest about what could be different next time. All applicant/s should be able to talk about examples in their own lives where they can describe a relationship that was broken or under considerable strain and what they did that helped the relationship to repair. The assessing social worker can get the applicant/s to imagine how they might support a child to do this.

30. I need you to regularly access training and attend support groups. I need you to learn, grow and develop to meet my changing needs.

Foster carers need to understand that attending training and support groups is part of the role and not optional. Applicant/s will have completed or be attending preparatory training by this point of the assessment and assessing social workers will have discussed the mandatory training that is required post approval. The assessment will also identify training areas that an applicant might need or want to access post approval; these will be detailed in the training and development plan document.

31. I need you to respond to me with sensitivity, curiosity and acceptance.

Trauma-informed parenting requires an understanding of child development and the impact of trauma and loss on how a child learns, grows and their behaviours. Foster carers need to develop emotionally attuned, proportionate and appropriate responses to these behaviours. Applicants will be supported to attend training where they can learn more (or refresh their knowledge) about the impact that trauma and loss can have on how a child interacts with others. The case studies can be used to think about the type of behaviours a child might present with and how an applicant thinks they could respond to the child.

32. If you choose to foster me long term, I need you to know that this means I will always be a part of your family and I will need your support throughout my life.

If a foster carer chooses to foster a child long-term, the child needs to know that the carer wants them to be part of the family on an ongoing basis; that there is no end point to the relationships, the care, the nurture and support. The child will also need to be supported to feel connected to two families: their foster family and their birth family. The child should not have to choose their foster family over their birth family. The assessing social worker can explore with the applicant/s whether they hope to provide long-term or short-term foster care and the implications of the different types of fostering.

33. If you choose to foster me short term, I need you to support me with my transition to another home, saying goodbye and staying in touch.

If a foster carer chooses to foster the child on a short-term basis, the child will need help to understand that they are not the carer's child forever and that the carer will support their transition to another home. Children will need preparation and age-appropriate explanations for saying goodbye. They will also require honest conversations about how the foster carer plans to stay in touch with them. The assessing social worker can explore with the applicant/s whether they hope to provide long-term or short-term foster care and the implications of the different types of fostering.

34. I need you to access help from other foster carers and support networks, to look after yourself and take care of yourself.

Self-care for foster carers is vital. Caring for children who have experienced trauma and loss is emotionally demanding and there is a need for foster carers to ensure they are noticing the impact of fostering on their own emotional wellbeing. Foster carers need to be proactive in engaging in activities, social connections and/or therapy to remain emotionally available for the child. Applicants should be encouraged to think about how they access support now and whether they envisage this being feasible if approved, and likewise regarding looking after their wellbeing. It will be important to maintain these connections, activities and habits when caring for a child.

35. I need you to support me with experiences and feelings of loss and bereavement.

Children in care experience loss and many of them experience bereavement as well. The assessing social worker should have a conversation with the applicants about their experiences of loss and bereavement, including how they managed these feelings themselves and for members of their family. Following on from this discussion, it is important for applicants to consider how they will help a child with these complex and distressing emotions.

36. I need you to support me with managing changes; I may need extra help doing this.

Help with managing changes and transitions and responding to situations in a timely manner is a significant skill. Children in care often find transitions confusing, scary or unsettling. For example, transporting a child via car and bus journeys can often be more stressful and potentially emotionally activating compared to non-care-experienced peers. Applicants can reflect on how they can support the children in the case studies with the various transition points they have and will continue to experience. They could draw on their own transition experiences and examples where they have helped others with transitions, such as moving home, changing school or job.

CASE STUDY – Mason is 6 years old.

Mason was removed from his parents eight weeks ago due to domestic violence he witnessed his father seriously physically harming his mother. Due to the trauma he has experienced Mason has loud outbursts most days, these can present as his being very sad, angry or both. His heightened state can last up to 30 minutes, then he feels tired and sometimes embarrassed afterwards. This affects how he interacts with his peers in school. Mason sometimes falls asleep in school. He responds well to routine in school and at home. He beams when given praise. Mason adores animals, especially cats, rabbits and guinea pigs. Mason is a natural at creating, often choosing arts and crafts activities. Mason does not like being left for any length of time to do an activity on his own. He constantly seeks out company.

Questions/ themes for assessing social worker to explore with applicant

- What challenges do you think Mason will need support with?
- What ideas do you have to help Mason when he can't control his strong emotions?
- How would you give Mason positive encouragement?
- How would you support him inside and outside of school to get along with his friends and build relationships with them?
- What training do you think would help you to meet his needs now and if Mason was to stay long term what other training might be useful as he grows?
- How will you provide Mason with the confidence that you are there for him, so he knows he is part of your life?
- How could you support Mason with a transition to another foster home or back to his family if he is only with you short term?
- As a foster carer you need support, where will you go for this?
- How can you support Mason's experience of loss?
- Mason needs extra help to manage change. What support could you give to him to help with any changes? (This could be moving school, a new social worker or changes to his family time).

Section C: Supporting information

This section lists the references, checks and other materials required as part of the assessment (where relevant).

References:

Personal references

Household member references

Former partner references

Employer references

Previous employer references

School, nursery, health visitor references

Other checks and materials:

Family tree or genogram

Ecomap

Chronology

Weekly schedule/planning grid

Home safety checklist

Financial assessment form

Dog/pet checklist

Fostering Family Protective Care Plan

Child's Protective Care Plan

Foster Carer Plan in case of Allegation

Preparation training record

Second opinion visit

Other information

Section D: Specialist reports

These are additional reports that might be submitted alongside Form F if the applicant/s have been assessed to be a parent and child foster carer, or if they have been long-term matched with a child/ren and the match is being taken to the panel.

Parent and child report
Permanent fostering report
Other reports

Section E: Summary and recommendation

Timescales – this should include how long the assessment took. If there were any pauses or significant delays, an explanation should be provided. For example, it is helpful to understand if the delay was the responsibility of the fostering service and if this caused tension/ frustration for the applicants then how was this managed.

Brief summary – this should be a summing up and final tying together of the assessment findings and analysis that have led to a positive recommendation. This section should not include any new information that has not been covered earlier in the report. Avoid repetition – panel members only need to read information once.

Recommendation – this should include approval status, matching considerations and areas to prioritise in a support plan. This will include details of the number of children and ages of children that the applicants have been recommended to care for. If they have been assessed to care for a parent and child this detail should be included here.

The applicant/s observations on the report

Assessing social workers must ensure that the applicant/s have had enough time to read the report, digest and reflect before providing their written feedback. They should be encouraged to be as honest as they can be, as this sets a precedent for a relationship between the foster carers (once approved) of trust and openness that will enhance the working relationship.

Acknowledgements

The revised Form F (April 2025) has been developed in consultation with: foster carers, care experienced adults, social workers, social work managers and representatives from key stakeholders in the sector. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed their time and ideas.

The 12 fostering services (local authorities and independent fostering providers) that volunteered and took part in piloting Form F over eight months provided a wealth of fostering expertise, invaluable and detailed feedback, rigorous testing and a passion to find positive solutions. The ethos of the pilot group membership reflected the positivity and commitment to improve the experience for applicants and also those assessing them.

- Brighton and Hove City Council
- Coventry City Council
- Ealing Council
- Leeds City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Newham Council
- Olive Branch Fostering
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Richmond and Wandsworth Councils
- Surrey County Council
- TACT Fostering
- Team Fostering

If you have any comments on the revised form and associated guidance, please email them to:

Emma Fincham – Fostering Consultant emma.fincham@corambaaf.org.uk

Tools and resources

The following are examples of tools and resources used by assessing social workers. This is not an exhaustive list - these are given as suggested viewing, reading or further research for applicants. Assessing social workers and fostering services will use many other tools and resources that are effective for supporting assessments of prospective foster carers.

What makes life good for children in care?

[10,000 Voices: The views of children in care on their well-being report](#) (CoramVoice)

Understanding the emotional impact of abuse, neglect and trauma

[PACE – A Therapeutic Approach](#) (Help Children Live Better Lives)

[Inside Out: Guessing the feelings](#) (YouTube video)

[Children's social care questionnaires 2024](#) (Ofsted, GOV.UK)

Digital safety

[Online safety – Keeping children safe online](#) (NSPCC)

[Navigating online life with children and young people](#) (CoramBAAF)

Protective characteristics

Understanding discrimination

[Social Graces: A practical tool to address inequality](#) (BASW)

[Understanding Unconscious Bias](#) (The Royal Society)

[What are microaggressions and how to call them out](#) (The Royal College of Nursing)

Anti-racist practice

[Our Hair Care, Our Skin Care](#) (Black Care Experience)

[We Are Not The Same - Africa and The Caribbean](#) (Black Care Experience)

[This Book is Anti-racist](#) (Jewell T and Durand A, 2020)

[Understanding the lived experiences of black Asian and minority ethnic children and families](#) (Research in Practice)

[Anti-racist Ally](#) (Williams S, 2020)

LGBTQ+

[The recruitment, assessment, support and supervision of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender foster carers](#) (Rees Centre)

[New Family Social](#)

Proud 2 b Parents

The Anti-Racist Social Worker in Practice (Edited by Nimal Jude, Tanya Moore and Glory Simango, 2025)

Neurodiversity and disability

Disability, disparity and demand: Analysis of the numbers and experiences of children in care and care leavers with a disability or long-term health condition (Coram)

Meeting the needs of neurodivergent children and young people (CoramBAAF)

The Challenges that social care services face in relation to looked after children with neurodevelopmental disorders (Heady N, Watkins A, John A, & Hutchings H, 2022)

References

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- Adams P and Jordan L (2018) [Complying with the GDPR and DPA: A good practice guide for fostering services in England](#), London: CoramBAAF
- Cane TC & Tedam P (2023) ['We didn't learn enough about racism and anti-racist practice'](#): newly qualified social workers challenge in wrestling racism' Social Work Education 42.:8
- Cane T and Ruch G (2024) [Anti-Racist Framework for Decision-Making in Transitioning Children from Minoritised Racial and Ethnic Groups into Transracial Adoptive Families](#) (AFDiT), Brighton: University of Sussex
- Chapman R (2017; 2025 edition forthcoming) [Undertaking a Fostering Assessment: A guide to collecting and analysing information for Form F \(Fostering\) England](#), London: CoramBAAF
- Cheruvallil-Contractor S, Halford A and Anand K (2024) [Expressions of Self: Supporting Minoritised Children's Identity, Dartington: Research in Practice](#)
- Children's Society (2025) [Identity](#)
- CoramBAAF (2023) [Implications of the Cumbria Child Safeguarding Practice Review](#)
- Department for Education (2013) [Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4: Fostering Services](#)
- Department for Education (2024) [Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services for children, young people, parents and carers](#)
- HM Government (2011a) [Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations 2011](#)
- HM Government (2011b) [Fostering Services National Minimum Standards](#)
- HM Government (2013) Care Planning, [Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services Regulations 2013](#)
- [Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) (2022)
- Pierre R (2022) An Open Letter to the Social Worker Who Wrote My Case Files, London: BASW, [An Open Letter to the Social Worker Who Wrote My Case Files | BASW](#)
- Social Work England (undated) [Our Approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#)
- Social Work England (2019) [Professional Standards](#)
- [The Black Care Experience™](#)
- [The Fostering Network: Skills to Foster training](#)