



Foster Care Policy

Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers



Sandwell

Children's Trust

Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers

NOTE

For temporary approval as foster carers of approved prospective adopters, see [Placements in Foster Care Procedure, Temporary Approval as Foster Carers of Approved Prospective Adopters](#).

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1. Responding to Initial Enquiries

All members of the public who make an initial enquiry by telephone, email or letter in relation to becoming a foster carer will be referred to the Fostering Service. All enquirers will be treated as a potential resource and given a prompt response. They will be contacted to gather further information and for a general discussion about fostering.

The Initial Referral Form will be completed in relation to all new enquiries. Preliminary basic information should be obtained - numbers in the household, the availability of a separate bedroom for foster children, working hours

etc. so that inappropriate enquiries can be filtered out. In addition, a check will be carried out in relation to enquirers and all members of their household on Children's Services records.

Where the enquirers are not previously known, they will be sent an Information Pack and letter. The Information Pack will be sent within 5 working days of the enquiry. Applications should be made in writing.

Where the enquirer or a member of the household is known, the enquiry will be passed to the manager for a decision on how to proceed. At this early stage, it may be appropriate to advise these enquirers against pursuing fostering if they clearly do not meet the basic criteria (see [Section 10, Criteria for Foster Carers](#)). The manager's decision will be communicated to the person concerned, with reasons given, and the decision will be recorded. Where the decision is not to proceed the referral will be closed. Where the decision is to proceed, the enquirer will be sent an Information Pack and the same procedure will be followed as for all other enquirers.

If there is no response within 2 weeks, the enquirer will be sent a follow up letter.

When a response is received, the records will be updated by the administrative staff and the manager will be informed.

2. Assessment – Stage One

Stage 1 of the assessment process is intended to provide the decision maker with basic information about the applicant to enable clearly unsuitable applicants to be sifted out without unnecessary bureaucracy or expenditure of time and resource by the fostering service or the applicant. More detailed information is collected in [Section 6, Assessment - Stage Two](#).

Where a person applies to become a foster carer and it is decided to assess their suitability to become a foster carer, the following information must be obtained as soon as reasonably practicable relating to the applicant and other members of their household and family:

- Full name, address and date of birth;
- Details of health (supported by a medical report);
- Particulars of any other adult members of the household;
- Particulars of the children in the family, whether or not members of the household, and any other children in the household;
- Particulars of their accommodation;
- The outcome of any request or application made by them or any other member of their household to foster or adopt children, or for registration as an early years provider or later years provider under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006), including particulars of any previous approval or refusal of approval relating to them or to any other member of the household;

- If the applicant has, in the preceding twelve months, been a foster parent approved by another fostering service provider, the name and address of that fostering service provider;
- Names and addresses of two persons who will provide personal references;
- In relation to the applicant and any other member of the applicant's household who is aged 18 or over, an enhanced criminal record certificate;
- Details of current, and any previous, marriage, civil partnership or similar relationship;
- The views of, the local authority in whose area the applicant lives, if different;
- Where the applicant has previously been, or is currently, approved as a foster carer by another fostering service provider, or as a prospective adopter by an adoption agency, and consents, access may be requested to the relevant records compiled by that other fostering service provider/ adoption agency in relation to the applicant. That service/agency must provide access within 15 working days of a request being received.

Records compiled by another fostering service, or an adoption agency, can be used to inform the new assessment of the applicant's suitability to foster. For instance, if previous partners have been interviewed in the past to verify facts, and the current assessing social worker is satisfied with the records in respect of these interviews, it should not be necessary to repeat the interviews if no further information is required. The assessing social worker should, however, satisfy themselves as to the quality and continuing relevance of the information before using it to inform the current assessment.

Where, having regard to any information obtained, it is decided (by the Fostering Manager) that the applicant is not suitable to become a foster carer; the applicant must be notified in writing with reasons. This notification may be given whether or not all of this information has been obtained. Such a notification may not be given more than 10 working days after all the information has been obtained. The applicant has no right to make representations about the decision or to have their case reviewed under the Independent Review Mechanism. However, the applicant must be informed that they can complain via the fostering service's complaints process if they are unhappy with the way in which their case has been handled. The complaints process should address whether or not the applicant's case has been handled in a reasonable way, rather than the question of the applicant's suitability to foster.

Where all the specified information has been obtained and notification has not been given within 10 working days that the applicant is not suitable, then the application must proceed to **Section 6, Assessment - Stage Two**.

Note that Stages 1 and 2 of the assessment process can be carried out concurrently, but the Stage 1 information must be sought as soon as possible and the decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed Stage 1 must be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that Stage being received.

On receipt of the completed application form, consent to medical checks and authorisations for the statutory checks/references, the administrative staff will input the date of the application and details of the household members on the electronic records.

The Fostering Panel must make its recommendation on the application within eight months of the applicant first applying to be assessed.

The manager will book the applicants on to the Foster Carers Preparation/Training Course - see [Section 5, Training Course](#).

3. Sharing Information for the Purposes of Foster Carer Assessments

3.1 Information Sharing

Sharing information about a person that is held in their existing foster carer or adopter records is permitted for the purposes of informing a new assessment of a person's suitability to foster or adopt. For instance, if previous partners have been interviewed in the past to verify facts, and the current assessing social worker is satisfied with the records in respect of these interviews, it should not be necessary to repeat the interviews if no further information is required. The assessing social worker should, however, satisfy themselves as to the quality and continuing relevance of the information before using it to inform the current assessment.

Information that should be shared, upon request, in order to inform a new assessment of a person's suitability to foster or adopt includes:

- The report of the original assessment of the person's suitability to foster or adopt (if it is considered by the body requesting the information to be recent enough to be relevant);
- A copy of the report of the last review of the individual's continuing suitability to foster or adopt and any other review report considered useful to understanding the person's current suitability to foster or adopt;
- Details of any concerns about standards of practice and what if anything is being done/has been done to address them;
- Details of allegations made against the foster carer/adopter or their household members; and
- Any other information considered to be relevant to the assessment of the person's suitability to foster/adopt.

3.2 Consent

Information should only be shared with the informed, explicit consent of all parties referred to in the information, including young people where they have sufficient understanding to consent to the sharing of their information (if they do not have sufficient understanding, the consent of a person with Parental Responsibility would need to be obtained). This means that the person giving consent needs to understand why their information is to be shared, what will be shared, who will see their information, the purpose to which it will be put and the implications of sharing that information.

If consent is refused, the current fostering service or adoption agency should consider whether there is any information in the records that is a cause for concern. Any information about an applicant's conduct or suitability to foster/adopt that has caused concern should be shared even if the individual has refused consent. If there are no such concerns, and the individual has refused consent, information should not be shared. This may require documents to be redacted to remove information relating to individuals who have refused consent.

Requests for access to information should be accompanied by the written consent of the applicant to the sharing of their information.

3.3 Timescales

The receiving service should acknowledge the request within two working days, seek consent from all others referred to in the information within five working days and the information, redacted where necessary, should be provided within 15 working days.

4. Checks and References

4.1 Checks

The administrative staff will arrange for the following checks to be made on all members of the household aged 18 and over: Disclosure and Barring Service, Ofsted, Probation, Health Trust, Education, Children's Services (including the List of Children with a [Child Protection Plan](#)) and the NSPCC, and whether the applicant's have a right to work in the UK. Where the applicants live or have lived outside the local authority area, the checks must be made with the local authority and health trust where the applicants live/have lived. These checks should be recorded including the date when the checks were made.

Where the applicant or any member of the household has been known to Children's Services, information should be obtained from the relevant social worker.

Where applicants have recently moved to the UK (within the last 10 years), checks may also be made through [Protecting Children and Uniting Families Across Borders](#) (formerly known as International Social Services) and/or the relevant Consulate on all members of the household aged 10 and over.

In addition, where the applicant has school age children, the relevant school(s) may be contacted, with the permission of the applicant, for information regarding the applicant's ability to promote the child's education.

On receipt of the statutory checks, the administrative staff will update the electronic records.

Where the checks reveal that the applicant or a member of the household is a [Disqualified Person \(Foster Carer\)](#), see [Persons Disqualified from Fostering Procedure](#).

Where the information relates to an offence, which does not automatically disqualify the applicant, for example because the applicant is seeking approval in relation to a specific child only, the manager must consider whether the application should still proceed. Such convictions will not necessarily preclude an application, but this will depend on the seriousness of the offence and how long ago it was committed. In a case where the conviction would usually disqualify an applicant, the case should be referred to the Fostering Panel and the Agency Decision Maker (Fostering) for a preliminary decision - see [Persons Disqualified from Fostering Procedure](#). In any other case where there is doubt, an early referral should be made to the Fostering Panel and/or [Agency Decision Maker \(Fostering\)](#).

Information relevant to the application that has been obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service may only be retained on the applicant's file for a limited period and should be destroyed when a decision is made on the

application. The manager should note on the file that the Disclosure and Barring Service information has been destroyed and that the information led to a particular view, without citing the information itself.

4.2 References

Where the applicant has been a foster carer within the preceding 12 months and was approved as such by another fostering service provider, a reference must be requested from that other fostering service provider.

There is no requirement to also interview personal referees (see below). However, additional verbal and/or written references may be sought from personal referees. If the previous fostering service, for whatever reason, does not provide a reference, interviews with two personal referees must be conducted.

Otherwise, each applicant will be asked to provide the names of two personal referees, who are adults, have known the applicant for at least five years and are not related to the applicant, and two other referees who may be family members or personal friends. All referees should be people who know the applicants well in a personal capacity.

Where there is a joint application, referees should know both applicants, or additional referees will be required. Where the applicant has worked with children or vulnerable adults, all previous employers in this position must be contacted and references requested.

A written reference must be obtained from each applicant's current employer regardless of the applicant's occupation. This may be one of the four references provided. In addition, where the applicant has frequently changed jobs, written references should also be obtained from past employers.

Where the prospective applicant has made a previous application to foster or adopt, the relevant agency must be asked to confirm in writing the outcome of the application and provide a written reference.

The administrative staff will send requests for written references to each referee.

On receipt of the references, the administrative staff will update the electronic records.

4.3 Health

The applicants will be provided with the relevant medical form to fill in with their details and send to their GP with a covering letter requesting that the GP complete the Form and send it to the manager. On receipt, the manager will pass the information to the Medical Adviser for comment.

Where the medical information suggests that the applicant may not be suitable for health reasons, this should be discussed in detail with the applicant(s) and withdrawal may be advisable at this stage. Additional advice may be sought from the Medical Adviser or the Medical Adviser may raise questions with the GP where this is appropriate. It may be necessary for reports from other health professionals also to be obtained and presented to the Medical Adviser and the Fostering Panel.

5. Training Course

The foster carers preparation/training course will cover in detail all aspects of the fostering task, including the need for approved foster carers to notify the manager of any changes in their home circumstances, for example any new relationships they have where they wish their new partners to become a member of the household - see [Section 13, Changes in the Foster Carer's Household or Circumstances](#) for the procedure to be followed where such changes occur.

Applicants will be booked on the course once their completed application forms are received. All prospective foster carers will be required to attend this training, which is an integral part of the assessment process.

The objectives of the course are:

- To raise awareness and understanding of the key issues which need to be addressed by all foster carers;
- To assist applicants to consider more thoroughly the implications of fostering;
- To assist applicants to determine the type of resource they can offer to the children needing foster placements.

Those facilitating the course will provide written feedback on issues relating to the applicants for the assessing social worker which must be used in his or her assessment. Any issues of concern should be referred to the manager.

Where issues emerge during the training as a result of which the manager decides that it is not appropriate to proceed with the application, the applicants should be visited by a social worker and notified in writing of the decision, with reasons. Advice should be given of any steps they may take in order to meet the criteria or of how they might pursue their interest elsewhere, if appropriate.

Where the applicant disagrees with the decision and/or is not willing to withdraw, a brief report on the application should be presented to the Fostering Panel and the procedure to be followed should be the same as if the report was a full report on the applicants (see [Section 7, The Panel Recommendation](#) to [Section 9, Representations / Independent Review Procedure](#)).

6. Assessment - Stage Two

Where the Assessment – Stage One information has been obtained, and no notification has been given within 10 working days that the applicant is not suitable to be a foster carer, the following must be undertaken:

- Obtain the following information relating to the applicant and other members of the household, together with any other relevant information:
 - Details of personality;
 - Religious persuasion, and capacity to care for a child from any particular religious persuasion;
 - Racial origin, cultural and linguistic background and capacity to care for a child from any particular racial origin or cultural or linguistic background;

- Past and present employment or occupation, standard of living, leisure activities and interests;
- Previous experience (if any) of caring for their own and other children;
- Skills, competence and potential relevant to their capacity to care effectively for a child placed with them.
- Consider whether the applicant is suitable to be a foster parent and whether the applicant's household is suitable for any child;
- Prepare a written report on the applicant which includes the following matters:
 - The information required to be obtained, as set out above;
 - Any other relevant information;
 - An assessment of the applicant's suitability to be a foster parent;
 - Proposals about any terms of approval.

(There are no specific regulatory requirements about the way in which assessment information must be collected or presented to panel.)

Where, having regard to the information obtained during Stage 2, it is decided that the applicant is unlikely to be considered suitable to become a foster parent, notwithstanding that not all the Stage 2 information has yet been obtained, a **Brief Report** may be prepared and submitted to the fostering panel in the same way as for a full assessment report. (There is no prescribed length or format for a brief report.)

The assessing social worker will:

- Familiarise him or herself with the application form;
- Contact the applicant(s) and arrange a visit;
- Draw up a written agreement setting out the dates for the assessment visits and the date for the presentation to the Fostering Panel;
- Interview couples individually and together and ensure the children of the applicant or other significant members of the family/household are seen alone;
- Contact ex partners (see below);
- Inform the applicant(s) of any revised timescales if there are delays.

The assessing social worker will record all appropriate factual information and address issues including the applicants' understanding of the following areas:

- Child rearing;
- Caring for children born to someone else;
- Contact between children and their families;

- Helping children to make sense of their past;
- Sexual boundaries and attitudes;
- Awareness of sexual and other forms of abuse;
- Health and health promotion;
- Promotion of education;
- Approaches to discipline;
- Awareness of how to promote secure attachments between children and appropriate adults;
- Religion;
- Standards of living and lifestyles;
- Racial, cultural and linguistic issues;
- Experiences of disability and attitudes to disability;
- Awareness of equal opportunities;
- Understanding and dealing with young people's behaviour including encouraging children to take responsibility for their behaviour and helping them to learn how to resolve conflict.

The list is not exhaustive - other issues relevant to the individual applicant and his or her family may need to be addressed. The skills and personal qualities that need to be evidenced will be different according to the type of fostering the applicants want to do, e.g. babies and toddlers, short term or permanent.

The assessing social worker may contact the previous partners of the applicants (taking care not to disclose confidential personal information about the applicant). Where there were any children of the relationship or where children were cared for jointly, the social worker will arrange to interview them face-to-face wherever practicable. All adult children of the applicant(s) living away from home may also be contacted.

Applicants will be encouraged to be actively involved in contributing towards the assessment, and supported to provide their own written report/portfolio for Panel to evidence their capabilities and to support their application.

The foster home will also be thoroughly checked to ensure it provides appropriate and safe accommodation for the child, as well as safe transport. Each child over 3 has their own bedroom or, where this is not possible; the sharing of the bedroom has been agreed by the . A risk assessment must be conducted in regard to pets.

The applicant must be notified that the case is to be referred to the fostering panel, be given a copy of the report and be invited to send any observations in writing within 10 working days beginning with the date on which the notification is sent.

At the end of the 10 working days, (or when the applicant's observations are received, whichever is sooner), the report, the applicant's observations on that report, if any, and any other relevant information obtained, must be sent to the fostering panel.

7. The Panel Recommendation

The assessing social worker will attend the Panel meeting, together with the applicants if they so wish. The decision to attend rests with the applicants and a wish not to attend will not prejudice consideration of their application.

Applicants who decide they wish to attend should be fully prepared as to the procedure prior to their attendance.

The Panel will consider the reports together with all the supporting documentation, and make a recommendation to the **Agency Decision Maker (Fostering)** regarding the suitability of the applicant for fostering.

The recommendation, with reasons, will be recorded in writing and, where approval is recommended, the category of fostering, any limitations of the approval to named children (for example in the case of a Family and Friends Foster Carer) or conditions as to the age range or number of children to be placed in the foster home will also be specified.

Where the applicant does not attend the Panel meeting, the social worker undertaking the assessment will advise the applicant of the Panel recommendation within 24 hours of the Panel meeting. This will be verbally, by telephone or, where appropriate, a home visit.

8. After the Panel Recommendation

The **Agency Decision Maker (Fostering)** will make a decision as to the suitability of the applicant, based on the reports presented to the Fostering Panel and the minutes detailing the Panel's recommendation. Where the decision is to approve the applicants as foster carers, the Agency Decision Maker will specify the terms of the approval i.e. the number and age range of children to be fostered, the type of placement and any specific inclusions/exclusions. Applicants can be approved for more than one placement category.

Where a Brief Report has been submitted to the fostering panel, the Agency Decision Maker will, taking into account the fostering panel's recommendation, make a determination about whether to terminate the assessment or whether the full assessment should be completed.

The decision must be made within 7 working days of the Panel meeting and must be recorded, together with reasons.

The manager will arrange for the applicants to be given verbal notification of the decision within 24 hours and written notice of the decision, with reasons, signed by the Agency Decision Maker, within 5 working days of the decision.

Upon approval, foster carers should be issued with an agreed form of identification to enable their role as a foster carer to be verified.

9. Representations / Independent Review Procedure

If, at Stage 2 of the assessment process, the Agency Decision Maker gives a **Qualifying Determination** that he/she proposed not to approve the applicants as foster carers, the applicant will be advised that if he or she wishes to challenge the decision, applicants should be advised they have a right to submit representations within 28 days of the date of the written notice of the decision to the Agency Decision Maker. In addition, as an alternative, they may exercise the right to apply to the Secretary of State to request a review of the decision by an Independent Review Panel under the **Independent Review Mechanism**. Any such application must be made in writing within 28 days of the decision and supported by reasons.

The foster carer will not have the right to request a review by an Independent Review Panel if he or she is regarded as disqualified as a result of a conviction or caution for a specified offence – see **Persons Disqualified from Fostering Procedure**.

Where it is decided at Stage 1 of the assessment process that the applicant is not suitable to become a foster carer, there is no right to have the case reviewed under the Independent Review Mechanism.

If no written representations or notification of a request for a review are received within this period, the Agency Decision Maker will decide whether or not to approve the applicant as a foster carer (following a full assessment) or continue the assessment (following a Brief Report).

If written representations are received within the period, the Panel Adviser will arrange for the reports and other documentation to be reconsidered by the Fostering Panel, taking into account the written representations, and make a new recommendation to the **Agency Decision Maker (Fostering)**.

The Panel Administrator will advise the applicant within 7 days of the date of the Panel meeting when they can attend and their written representations will be considered.

In these circumstances, applicants who wish to attend the meeting of the Fostering Panel can arrange for a friend or supporter to accompany them.

After considering the representations, the Panel will make a recommendation, which the Agency Decision Maker (Fostering) will consider before a final decision is made.

If the decision remains not to approve the application, the manager will arrange for the applicants to be informed verbally within 2 working days. Written notice of the final decision, together with reasons, must be sent to the applicant by the Panel Adviser within 7 working days of the Panel meeting. Information about the Complaints Procedure must also be sent. A copy of the report to the Panel, the Panel's recommendation and the decision, with reasons, must be retained on the applicant's case file.

If the applicant decides to refer the matter to an Independent Review, the relevant Panel reports, any new information obtained since the Panel meeting, a record of the decision made and reasons, a copy of the written notification of the decision and a copy of the Panel minute, if different, will be sent to the Independent Review within 10 working days of their written request.

The procedure for the Independent Review is carried out by BAAF; the applicant and two representatives of the fostering agency will be invited to attend the Independent Review.

After considering the representations, the Independent Review may make a recommendation, which the Agency Decision Maker will consider before a final decision is made.

Written notice of the final decision, together with reasons, must be sent to the applicant within 7 working days of the receipt of the Independent Review recommendation.

Where the decision is to approve the application, the procedure set out in [Section 11, After Approval](#) will be followed.

10. Criteria for Foster Carers

10.1 Individual and Joint

Applications will be considered from married couples, civil partners, unmarried couples or single people.

10.2 Religion

Applications will be considered from people of any or no religious persuasion.

10.3 Ethnicity

Applications will be considered from people of any race or culture.

10.4 Age

The minimum age for foster carers is generally 21 years. In exceptional circumstances, e.g. with some Family and Friends Carers, the minimum age may be reduced to 18. There is no specific upper age limit.

10.5 Gender

Applications will be considered from people of either sex and from same sex couples.

10.6 Sexual Orientation

Applications will be considered from people of any sexual orientation.

10.7 Income and Work Commitment

Applicants may be in work or not.

10.8 Health

Applicants will be required to have a full medical and undergo any further tests/checks that may be required by the Fostering Panel's Medical Adviser. The Medical Adviser will advise on the applicants' ability, from a health point of view, to meet the needs of a child who is fostered. Any comments or advice given by the Medical Adviser must be taken seriously by the applicants and will be addressed during the assessment process.

Applicants are expected to positively promote a healthy life-style which will enable a child to reach his or her full potential. This would encompass attention to nutrition, exercise, routine and hygiene.

It is expected that foster carers will comply with nationally recommended alcohol consumption levels and that children's needs and safety will be met at all times.

10.9 Criminal Convictions

A person who is seeking approval as a foster carer will not be considered if s/he or any adult member of the household is within the category of **Disqualified Persons (Foster Carer)** unless the application is to foster a child who is already living with the applicant(s) and at least one of the applicants is a relative of the child, in which case the caution/conviction will not automatically preclude the application but will be taken into account when assessing the suitability of the applicant - see **Persons Disqualified from Fostering Procedure**.

Other convictions will not necessarily preclude an application, but this will depend on the seriousness of the offence and how long ago it was committed. All such cases will be referred to the Fostering Service Manager who may also consult the Agency Decision Maker.

10.10 Accommodation

Applicants may own their own home or live in rented accommodation.

They will need living and sleeping accommodation appropriate to the number and ages of the children they are seeking to foster. They must be able to offer separate bedrooms for each foster child. Only in exceptional circumstances would sharing bedrooms be allowed and this would NEVER be with adult sons or daughters of the foster carer.

It is important that the home environment is child-friendly, welcoming to children, safe and meets reasonable levels of hygiene.

All applicants will have a safety check on their home undertaken by a trained safety assessor. This will include the outdoor space, animals (including the sleeping and toileting arrangements for any pet) and the holding of any firearms.

10.11 Child Care Experience

It is important that the applicant who is going to be the main carer has some experience of 'hands-on' care of children of the age group in which the applicants are interested.

10.12 Family Contact

All applicants must be prepared to facilitate contact between any foster child and his or her parents and significant family members.

11. After the Approval

Once approved, the administrative staff will enter the foster carers' approval details, including their first review date, on the Fostering Register database (see **Section 12, Register of Foster Carers**) and update the electronic

records. They will also send notice of the outcome to all agencies consulted during the assessment and approval process.

The foster carer will be allocated a supervising social worker, preferably the one who has undertaken their assessment - see [Supervision and Support of Foster Carers Procedure](#). If the social worker does not know the new carer, he or she will read the BAAF Form F and the supporting documentation presented to the Fostering Panel including the references prior to introducing him or herself to the carers and arranging to meet the carers, their family and members of their support network as appropriate.

The supervising social worker will visit the foster carers within one week of their approval and request the foster carer to sign a Foster Care Agreement between the local authority and the foster carer, which contains the information the foster carer needs to carry out his or her functions as a foster carer effectively, ensuring that the foster carer understands its contents.

The foster carer will be given two copies for signature, and will retain one signed copy. The other will be kept on the foster carer's file, together with the report and supporting documents presented to the Fostering Panel, a copy of the Panel's recommendation and a copy of the approval decision.

The Foster Care Agreement will contain the following information:

- a. The terms of the foster carer's approval;
- b. The support and training to be provided to the foster carer;
- c. The procedure for the review of the foster carer's approval;
- d. The procedure for placements of children;
- e. The procedure for making representations and complaints;
- f. The requirement to inform the fostering service of any change of circumstance, address or in the household composition, or of any registration as a childminder or application to adopt or of any offence;
- g. The requirements in relation to confidentiality and internet usage;
- h. The procedures for behaviour management and unauthorised absences of children placed with the foster carer including the ban on corporal punishment;
- i. The procedures for informing the supervising social worker of the child's progress and any significant events relating to the child;
- j. The need to give 28 days' notice in writing of they wish to cease fostering;
- k. The need to allow access to the [Regulatory Authority](#).

New foster carers will also be given access to Foster Carers Hand-Book, which contains information about fostering in the Trust and covers policies, procedures, guidance, legal information and insurance details. Information about local foster carer support groups will also be provided.

The foster carer(s) must sign confirmation of receipt. The signed and dated confirmation of receipt will be placed on their file.

Foster carers will be assisted by their supervising social worker to produce a Safe Caring Policy and Fire Plan.

The supervising social worker will continue to provide support and supervision to the foster carer up to, during and after all placements - see [Supervision and Support of Foster Carers Procedure](#) and ensure that they understand the need to undertake Disclosure and Barring Service and other checks and assessments on any new member of the household - see [Section 13, Changes in the Foster Carer's Household or Circumstances](#) - and the need to repeat Disclosure and Barring Service checks on themselves every three years (unless they have subscribed to the [Disclosure and Barring Service Update Service](#)) - see [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#).

12. Register of Foster Carers

A register of all approved foster carers will be maintained by the fostering service containing the following particulars:

- a. The name, address, date of birth, sex and ethnic origin of each foster carer;
- b. The date of approval and of each review of the approval;
- c. The category and current terms of the approval;
- d. The name, address, date of birth of each Connected Person with whom a child is placed under Regulation 24 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 and who has been granted temporary approval as a foster carer, together with the date and terms of the temporary approval.

Once approved, the administrative staff will be informed and will enter the foster carers' approval details, including their first review date, on the Fostering Register database.

13. Changes in the Foster Carers Household or Circumstances

The supervising social worker will ensure that any newly approved foster carer is clear about his or her responsibility to notify the fostering service before any change in the composition of their household occurs or where there is any significant change in their circumstances which affects their fostering, for example any new relationship, pregnancy or bereavement.

If the supervising social worker discovers that there has been a change in the foster carer's household without prior notice, the manager must be informed and an immediate review of the foster carer's approval must be convened - see [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#). In these circumstances, a suspension of the foster carer's approval may have to be considered at the review.

13.1 Foster Carers Partners

Where the proposed new member of the household is a partner of the foster carer, there will be a presumption that he or she will have a part to play in caring for any child in the placement and therefore a full Form F assessment of his or her suitability for this role must be completed before the partner moves into the foster home.

The same procedure for this assessment will be carried out as for any foster carer applicant and it will be presented to the Fostering Panel and the [Agency Decision Maker \(Fostering\)](#) in accordance with the preceding paragraphs of this chapter. There will be no presumption that any such assessment will be approved.

Pending the completion of the full assessment, where the foster carer wishes his/her partner to stay overnight before the full assessment is completed, a Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced check must be carried out, and a risk assessment must also be completed to determine the level of additional checks required, before agreement to overnight stays can be given. The risk assessment should take account of, amongst other things, the number and ages of the children in the placement, their views about the foster carer's partner, the significance and stability of the relationship (including how long they have known each other) and the foster carer's history of fostering. Any agreement to overnight stays must be endorsed by the Fostering Service Manager.

13.2 Other members of the household

Where a foster carer proposes that any person will join the household, notice must be given before this occurs in sufficient time to enable a Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced check to be carried out on the relevant person and an assessment at the appropriate level to be undertaken before the change in household composition occurs. The required detail of the assessment will depend on the extent to which the new member of the household will undertake a caring role in relation to any child placed. Where the new member of the household will play a part in caring for the child in the placement, consideration will be given to the need for a full Form F assessment as for any new partner of the foster carer. Otherwise, the assessment will be considered at a Foster Carer Review which should be convened to consider the change in the foster carer's circumstances - see [Review and Termination of Approval of Foster Carers Procedure](#). This will determine whether any change to the foster carer's terms of approval is required and if so, a report to the Fostering Panel will be prepared.

For Exemptions to the usual limit of three children and Alterations or other Extensions to Approval, see [Exemptions and Extensions/Variations to Foster Care Approval Procedure](#).

End