## N.B no new partner should stay overnight in a foster home without a DBS and local authority check being completed by Dudley MBC fostering Service.

## What a single registered foster carer should tell Dudley MBC Fostering:

All foster carers are required to notify the agency holding their registration of any *significant* change in circumstances. A single foster carer who begins a relationship with a new partner that will result in that person having contact with looked after children must inform their supervising social worker. A DBS application in respect of the new partner should ALWAYS be undertaken at this point, as well as a local authority check.

If the foster carer and their new partner plan to live together, the foster carer should inform their supervisor as soon as possible and the following will need to be recorded:

1. The full address of where the foster carer and new partner will be living;
2. The date from which the foster carer and new partner will be living together;
3. If it is the intention of the foster carer and their new partner to seek joint foster carer registration, or not.

## What Dudley MBC Fostering will do:

If the registered foster carer and their new partner do not intend to seek joint registration, then the foster carer and the fostering service should have discussions around the practicalities of this and the regulatory need for joint approval of partner living within the same household as this is deemed a significant change in circumstances. Where progress on this issue cannot be made the matter will be presented to fostering panel for consideration and the DMBC will recommend termination of approval.

A meeting will be required to consider the required changes to the care plans for any looked after children in placement with the foster carer. Where joint registration is sought, the supervising social worker will hold a meeting with the registered foster carer and their new partner to ensure both fully understand the requirements of the fostering task. This will be recorded as a supervision.

The supervising social worker will then inform their team manager and an agreement will be reached on the commencement as soon as possible of a full assessment with regard to the suitability of the foster carer and their new partner to hold foster carer registration. Arrangements should also be made for the new partner to attend Skills to Foster – the registered foster carer can also attend with the new partner if they wish.

The supervising social worker will also inform the social worker and team manager for any looked after children in the care of the registered foster carer and consideration will be given to the need to make changes to the Placement Plan / Care Plan for each looked after child concerned.

**Impact on the single registered foster carer:**

From this point on, **no new** placements can be made with the registered foster carer and any vacancies the registered foster carer may have will be restricted. If the registered foster carer has no looked after children in placement, they will be considered unavailable for placements.

## How a new partner assessment is recorded and processed

The allocated assessor will record their assessment as an update to the registered foster carers initial assessment, with all relevant additions to the new partner (applicant) included.

The amended and updated assessment will be taken forward in the usual way and only when a positive decision has been made by the Agency Decision Maker and a signed notification of approval has been received can the foster carers be available for new placements. A new foster carer agreement will also need to be signed by both foster carers **before** new placements can be made.

## What if the new partner is deemed unsuitable to become a foster carer

If at any point in the above process the assessment of the new partner concludes they are unsuitable to be registered as a foster carer, the supervising social worker and their team manager/Service manager will inform the Head of Service for Children in Care and Resources and the social worker/team manager for any children in placement and an urgent meeting will be convened to consider any changes to the plan for the child or children that maybe necessary. Unless the registered foster carer resigns their registration at this point, it will be necessary to present the evidence regarding the unsuitability of the new partner to a foster panel, either in the form of an updated assessment, or an annual review of the registered foster carer.

The registered foster carer and new partner have the same rights to appeal any decision made by Dudley MBC Fostering as all new applicants to foster.

**Standards and Regulations**

The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011:

* Regulation 27: Approval of foster parents
* Regulation 28: Reviews and terminations of approval
* Schedule 5 (2)(b)(ii)): Changes to household composition

Children Act 1989: fostering services, Volume 4: statutory guidance on fostering services for looked-after children:

* 5.31: “The Regulations refer only to approval of individuals. Where two people will be sharing the care of a child, whether they be a couple or any other partnership, they should be jointly assessed and approved as foster carers. Where a single foster carer takes a partner who will be sharing the care of any foster children, they must discuss this with their supervising social worker so that agreement can be reached about the best way to update their assessment and to assess the partner for approval as a foster carer within an appropriate timescale.”

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