

Fostering Recruitment and Assessment Policy

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1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1. Somerset Council is committed to providing a range of foster carers to support the diverse needs of the children and young people that we look after. It is important that foster carers can provide a safe and positive environment where children and young people are nurtured and able to develop in a positive way. The role of the foster carer is skilled and it is crucial that through the recruitment and assessment process, skilled and competent carers are approved.
- 1.2. This policy relates to: FOSTERING STANDARD 13 - Recruiting and assessing foster carers who can meet the needs of looked after children (minimumstandards.org). Checks and references are carried out in line with <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/regulation/26/made>.
- 1.3. Paragraphs 5.29 – to 5.38 of the Fostering Guidance was amended on the 1st July 2013. This amendment includes information regarding stages 1 and 2 of the approval processes and should be read in conjunction with this policy.
- 1.4. A flow chart which summarises the foster carer assessment and approval process is in *Appendix 1* of this document.
- 1.5. Prospective foster carers are considered in terms of their capacity to look after children in a safe and responsible way that meets the child's needs.
- 1.6. The written report on the person's suitability to be approved as a foster carer sets out clearly all the information that the fostering panel need to make a recommendation and that the agency decision maker (ADM) needs in order to make an approval decision. The reports should be accurate, up-to-date and include evidence-based information that distinguishes between fact, opinion, and third-party information. The reports are prepared, signed, and dated by the assessing social worker who assessed the prospective foster carer and countersigned and dated by the fostering team manager.
- 1.7. Regulations 26 and 27 of the Fostering Regulations 2011 (as amended 2013) are relevant to fostering recruitment and assessment and should be read in conjunction with this policy. [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulation 26 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/581/regulation/26/made)
- 1.8. Fostering services will make full use of the talents, skills, and experiences of their foster carers and members of the fostering household. For example, in supporting delivery of training or mentoring/supporting other foster carers. In considering the suitability of one of its approved foster carers or a member of their household to also work for the fostering service, care must be taken to

avoid any conflict of interest or negative impact on foster children, in the same way that any employer needs to be mindful of a conflict of interest within their organisation. All foster carers and employees should declare any conflicts of interests.

2. Scope of Policy

- 2.1. Somerset Council Fostering Service is committed to recruiting foster carers who are able to meet the needs of the children/young people in Somerset who are in need of a fostering family.
- 2.2. Somerset Council Fostering Service has a diverse range of recruitment activities to raise the profile of fostering and reflect the changing needs of the service. Campaigns showcase the transformational power of fostering and encourage people to consider changing a young person's experience by becoming a foster carer for Somerset Council. Further information can be found at [Fostering in Somerset](#). Campaigns are delivered across a range of media channels and platforms, to include out of home advertising, radio advertisement, terrestrial and digital television, press releases, and carer-focused films. Competitions and publicity initiatives, stakeholder engagement and communications, internal and external events, business partnerships, digital marketing activities across social media platforms, digital display and Pay Per Click Google advertising are also used. Somerset has a Communications and Marketing Strategy which is updated annually, and informed by primary and secondary data and research, campaign evaluations, target audience demographics and business needs. Retention activities also form part of the communications and marketing strategy, with a variety of events and initiatives that aim to improve carer/service relationships and reduce de-registrations where appropriate.
- 2.3. Children and young people who are looked after are involved with the recruitment of foster carers. Approved foster carers, Somerset in Care Council (SiCC) and Somerset Leaving Care Council (SLCC) work alongside the Recruitment Team, to support children and young people to attend and contribute to events and campaigns where suitable.
- 2.4. There is an administrative process for responding to enquiries. All enquiries about fostering in Somerset are responded to by telephone within one working day of their contact. If the enquirer is unavailable, further contact will be attempted by a combination of phone calls, text messages, and emails. Where possible, and if convenient for the enquirer, an initial screening will take place when contact is made. If this is not convenient, an alternative time will be arranged for the screening which usually takes approximately 15-20 minutes. If the enquirer is likely to progress, a member of the Recruitment

Team will undertake an initial home visit. Somerset Council Fostering Service aim for an initial home visit to take place within 10 working days from the initial screening. Where possible a member of the wider fostering team will accompany the Recruitment Team worker on this visit.

2.5. If prospective carers' experience and circumstances meet the fostering service's criteria and there is agreement to proceed, an application form is provided to the enquirer for completion. The Recruitment Team practitioner reserves the right to ask applicants to undertake skills to foster training either prior to, or after the issue of an application form, dependant on the prospective carers circumstances and understanding. Once the application has been accepted, the appropriate checks are undertaken.

2.6. The initial fostering criteria is as follows:

- Applicants must have a spare bedroom available for fostered children.
- Applicants must not have committed harm or an offence against a child or young person, or an offence that could pose risk to a child or young person.
- Applicants must not have a child in their care who is currently looked after by Somerset Council or another local authority.
- Applicants must be over 21.
- Applicants must not have parental responsibility for a child in their care who is subject to a current child protection plan.
- Applicants must be open to working in a trauma informed and therapeutic way, understanding behaviour and responding to it appropriately.

2.7. Relevant Safeguarding checks (see appendix 2) must be undertaken for all applicants. All applicants must give their written consent to checks being made with a wide range of agencies; these include (but are not limited to):

- Enhanced DBS Check
- Local authority checks
- Personal references
- Health assessments
- Home safety
- Dog and pet assessments
- Financial assessments
- Overseas checks
- Social media and internet checks
- Former partner checks
- Employment and voluntary work references
- School, nursery and health visitor references

2.8. All applicants are required to give at least 2 personal referees. The referees must be able to comment on the potential carer's capacity to care for children

and must be willing to be interviewed. Good practice suggests that these personal referees should not be related to the applicant/s.

- 2.9. If an applicant has been a foster carer in the previous 12 months a written reference from their previous fostering service must be obtained.
- 2.10. Social media checks must be undertaken on prospective applicants. If any checks indicate that further information or assessment of risk is required, this will be undertaken and actioned accordingly.
- 2.11. Somerset Council Fostering Service is required to complete enhanced DBS checks for the applicant and any other household members aged 18 or over. There is no legal requirement to undertake DBS checks for adults living at other addresses, but in some circumstances, this is appropriate and good practice. For example, regular adult visitors to the home or a person in the foster carer's support network who will be actively supporting them with the children in their care.

3. Assessment

- 3.1. Prospective carers will undergo a comprehensive assessment in order to assess their suitability to become foster carers. Assessments are undertaken by appropriately qualified and supervised staff who will work sensitively and honestly to gather the information needed. Completed assessments must contain analysis of the information obtained through assessment and a recommendation. They are then submitted to the fostering panel for a recommendation, which is then presented to the Agency Decision Maker for a decision.
- 3.2. The fostering assessment is undertaken in two parts (see *Appendix 1 - Schedule 3 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013*). Stage 2 can be completed in parallel with stage 1 of the assessment.
- 3.3. **Stage 1 of the assessment:**
If at any point during stage 1 (when checks and references are being carried out), or within 10 working days of its completion, the fostering service decides that the applicant is not suitable to foster, they must write to the applicant informing them of this decision and give reasons for it. If an applicant is unhappy about the way that their application has been handled, they are able to use and follow the Somerset Council complaints process. The complaints procedure should only address whether the applicant's application has been

handled in a reasonable way and not to question the applicant's suitability to foster.

3.4. Stage 2 of the assessment: The information for stage 2 of the assessment is set out in Schedule 3 (*Appendix 1*). If information comes to light during this part of the assessment which indicates that the applicant is unlikely to be suitable to foster, a 'brief report' can be completed setting out the details of the assessment which has been completed and the reasons for considering the applicant as unsuitable. In such situations, the applicant/s must be notified that the brief report is to be sent to the panel, given a copy of the brief report, and given 10 working days from the date of notification to send any responses to the fostering service. The report should be presented to the fostering panel alongside any comments from the applicant. When or if an applicant withdraws from the process there is not a requirement to complete a report or submit this to the panel.

3.5. A stage 2 assessment that has been started must be completed unless:

- The assessment is terminated following a brief report.
- The applicant withdraws from the process.
- The applicant is deemed unsuitable as a result of stage 1 of the assessment (where stages 1 and 2 have been carried out in parallel) **or**
- It becomes apparent that the applicant or an adult member of their household has been convicted of, or cautioned for, a specified offence (defined in regulation 26 [6]).

3.6. The assessment will take place over a 16-week period from the date when the application has been allocated to an Assessing Social Worker. All prospective carers must fully participate in the process of their assessment. The Assessing Social Worker must meet all members of the household and speak with, or meet, any other relevant parties (for example, adult children of the applicants no longer living with them). The Assessing Social Worker has professional responsibility for the assessment and, in conjunction with their manager, decides when the assessment is ready for presentation to panel.

3.7. The assessment and approval process is comprehensive, thorough, and fair. An explanation of the process and the factors being assessed will be given to prospective foster carers at each stage of the assessment.

3.9 Terms of approval should reflect the applicant's circumstances. For example, the number of children should be based on available bedrooms or potential to share if they are a sibling group. Recommendations should include an assessed recommendation based on gender and any additional considerations given to gender where appropriate and also a recommendation for short term/long term. New applicants without previous fostering or relevant

experience should come with an approval recommendation of short term (up to two years). Long term approval can be considered at the point of first or second annual review. When discussing recommendations for terms of approval with new applicants, the fostering service will discuss potential for long term care in the future and how this works with matching children with foster carers. Terms of approval is outlined in the 0 – 18 Policy:

[Local Resources \(proceduresonline.com\)](http://proceduresonline.com)

All prospective foster carers are expected to attend fostering panel when their application is being heard. During the assessment prospective foster carers will be informed of their rights to make representations and complaints.

4. Medicals

- 4.1. An initial medical is undertaken during stage 1 of the fostering assessment. This is part of the statutory checks required.
- 4.2. Approved foster carers are required to have an updated medical and report provided every three years or sooner if there are health concerns or worries. All medicals will be paid for by Somerset Council.
- 4.3. All health information will be reviewed by the fostering agency medical advisor who will interpret, analyse and summarise any medical advice or concerns. Further information or assessment can be requested by the medical advisor if required.

5. Selection of Foster Carers

- 5.1. There are certain criminal convictions which debar a person from becoming a foster carer. Further information can be found in: Fostering Regulations 2011: [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulation 26](#) and [The Fostering Services \(England\) Regulations Schedule 4](#) of Fostering Regulations (2011).
- 5.2. An applicant will not be discriminated against in applying to foster, on the grounds of age, sex, sexuality, gender identity, disability, marital status, faith, nationality, appearance, or other protected characteristics. All factors will be taken into account during the assessment process, in considering the applicant's ability to look after a child in a safe and responsible way. The recruitment, support, and training of foster carers throughout the recruitment process reflects Somerset's commitment to having a range of foster families sufficiently diverse to meet the diverse needs of children and young people,

including social, cultural, linguistic, and religious needs, as well as any needs relating to disability, gender, religion or sexual orientation.

5.3. Corambaaff Practice note (68) outlines the potential for significant harm from passive smoking and Somerset Council Fostering Service recognises the impact on health of smoking, vaping, and passive smoking on children. The Assessing Social Worker will explore with the applicants, the risks associated with smoking, any mitigation required, how the applicant can suitably role model a healthy lifestyle and protect any child in their care from their smoking. Somerset Council will not place any child under 5 or older children with known respiratory problems or disabilities with carers where any carer or member of the household smokes or vapes. For further information on smoking/vaping, please refer to the [Alcohol, Drugs and Smoking \(trixonline.co.uk\)](http://trixonline.co.uk) in Somerset's Foster Carers Handbook.

5.4. Stability is important for the children and young people that we look after. Therefore, Somerset Fostering Services require:

- Prospective foster carers in a relationship should normally have been living together for a minimum of 12 months before they can proceed with their fostering application.
- Prospective foster carers must be able to evidence financial stability. Regulation [26\(1\)\(a\)](#) and [Schedule 3 part \(2\)](#), of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011, refers to the use of a financial assessment to review the applicants financial stability when caring for a child.
- Prospective foster carers must be living in secure, safe, and appropriate accommodation. Further information to evidence this may be required, for example a letter regarding tenancy from applicant's landlord.
- Consideration should be given to the timeliness of the application with relation to any significant life events – such as relationship breakdown or bereavement.

5.5. Somerset Council Fostering Service will look for the following positive indicators in the carers that they assess:

- A special capacity for empathy (rather than sympathy) “to put oneself in the child's shoes”.
- Ability to want to understand the child's experiences and trauma and to begin to make sense of them for the child.
- Some previous experience of understanding or working with children and/ or young people or a willingness to gain this early in the assessment process.

- Evidence that they can understand and manage their own emotional needs and regulate their emotions.
- Willingness to discuss their own experience of having or not having, children themselves and the impact of this on their emotional resilience.
- Evidence of capacity to be flexible in their thinking and of their ability to repair relationships.
- Evidence that they have negotiated change well in the past.
- Some indication that conflict has been well managed, for example in family and personal relationships.
- Capacity to accept the child's history and background and to work positively with the child's birth family including promotion of family time.
- The recognition that a child in fostering might have complex needs due to the trauma they may have experienced. Prospective foster carers will need to demonstrate the potential to manage all aspects of these needs and must have a willingness to engage with support and to work as part of a team in the child's best interests.
- A realistic understanding of the impact of being a child looked after for the child for now and for later in their life.
- Recognition of the potential impact of fostering on their own family, friends, relationships, and lifestyle.
- A commitment to ongoing self-development and to undertake relevant training and development as necessary and on an ongoing basis.
- Commitment to complete the Training Support and Development Induction Standards (TSD) within the required timescales.
- Willingness to accept specialist training as identified in the child's care plan for children with disabilities and any other identified additional needs.
- Capacity to care for a child as an equal, valued member of their family and promote the child's welfare and identity.
- Capacity to meet a child's health and learning needs, to liaise appropriately with relevant professionals and act as an advocate for the child.
- Availability and willingness to attend all appropriate meetings in relation to the child, including having meetings, which could include the child's family, in their own home if appropriate for the child.
- Availability and a willingness to transport children to school/activities or family time arrangements.
- Ability to maintain regular written records for any child or young person being looked after. Contribute to life story work, including the creation of a memory box, with photos, souvenirs, mementos, etc.

- Ability to work positively as part of the professional team around the child, (this may include other professionals from Children's Services, Health, Education, and other organisations in supporting the implementation of the child/young person's care plan).

6. Applications to Foster by Somerset Council Staff or Councillors

6.1. If a member of staff working for Somerset Council wishes to become a foster carer or is a member of a fostering household, care should be taken to avoid any conflict of interest or negative impact on foster children. All foster carers and employees must declare any conflicts of interests.

7. Transfers from Independent Fostering Agencies or other Local Authorities

7.1. If foster carers who are currently approved with an independent agency or another Local Authority wish to transfer to Somerset Council, an updated assessment (including supporting documents as detailed in Checks and References table [appendix 2]) must be completed by the assessing social worker within 4-6 weeks. Safeguarding checks may need to be updated and Somerset Council will require foster carer consent for the following minimum information to be shared from their current agency or Local Authority:

- Form F/fostering assessment
- Agency reference
- The carers most recent annual review
- The carers Personal Development Plan or equivalent

The agency/Local Authority are obligated under regulation 26 to provide the information within 15 working days of it being requested.

7.2. In addition to the above information, the assessing social worker will arrange to view the files of the foster carer held by the current agency/Local Authority within 5 working days of the initial contact. It is anticipated that the above information in addition to information obtained from viewing the files, will be sufficient to evidence all schedule 3 checks and references. However, Somerset Council Fostering Service reserves the right to undertake any additional checks they feel are necessary.

7.3. **Medicals** - All foster carers transferring to Somerset Council will be required to have a new full GP medical which will be sent to Somerset's Medical

Advisor for summary. If an approved carer (who is transferring) already has a recent full medical, repeating this may not be required in all circumstances.

- 7.4. **DBS checks** - These must be completed as part of the application to Somerset Council for all adult household members, and any adult that is a frequent visitor, or stays at the home on a regular basis.
- 7.5. **Health and Safety checks** - These must be undertaken as part of the assessment and application to the Somerset Council Fostering Service.
- 7.6. If a foster carer wishing to transfer to Somerset Council already has a Looked After Child from another local authority living with them, the [Transfer of Foster Carers Protocol England \(2014\) \(Reviewed 2019\)](#) published by Fostering Network and updates published in Assessment and Recruitment Statutory Guidance Update should be adhered to. This includes a meeting with all relevant parties (including a member of Somerset's recruitment team and commissioning) where consideration can be given to the plans for any children living with the foster carer. This meeting should ensure all parties clear of future arrangements should the carer transfer to Somerset Council.
- 7.7. The assessment process including the gathering of information from the current Local Authority/agency will be completed within 4-6 weeks. The assessment will be quality assured and presented to fostering panel within 6-8 weeks. Fostering Panel will make a recommendation to the agency decision-maker (ADM) and the ADM will make a final decision. If the carers approval is ratified by ADM, the foster carer will give their written resignation to their existing fostering provider, the date of deregistration with their existing agency will be agreed and shared with Somerset Fostering Service. Deregistration will automatically happen 28 days from the carer's resignation, however should the carers existing agency be agreeable to deregister sooner, foster panel admin will ensure the carer is registered with Somerset Council on the agreed date. Foster carers cannot be registered with more than one fostering provider at any time. When the carer has successfully transferred to Somerset Council an annual review must take place no later than one year after approval. Further reviews must take place when the fostering service provider considers it necessary and at intervals of no longer than one year.

8. Preparation Training

8.1. The preparation training (Skills to Foster Training Programme) comprises of two sessions which usually takes place over 2 days. This is a compulsory part of the assessment process. Areas covered include:

- Identity and diversity of background and life chances.
- The context of children coming into care (how and why).
- Attachment, secure base, the impact of trauma, and therapeutic parenting.
- Working with others, including the child's family, and managing family time.
- Safer Caring and record keeping.
- Transitions.

8.2. Each applicant must attend Skills to Foster or pre-approval training, in addition to mandatory training, unless they are transferring from another fostering Agency/Local Authority with suitable recorded training. The mandatory training is a mix of face to face and virtual training. The aim of training is to help people make a decision as to whether fostering (and the timing of their application) is right for them as well as prepare and equip prospective carers with some of the skills and understanding needed for the complex task of fostering. The training forms part of the assessment process and feedback on the applicants is obtained from training course leaders. The fostering service will work with applicants to identify further training needs within the process.

8.3. A one-day preparation skills to foster course is provided separately for the children of prospective foster carers, depending upon their age and willingness to attend. The fostering service offers *We Care Too* sessions and an opportunity to have a visit by an assessing social worker for explanation.

9. Handover of Applications to Local Area Fostering Support Teams Upon Approval

9.1. Prior to approval, a joint visit will be arranged by the Assessing Social Worker, to make introductions to an allocated Supervising Social Worker. Following approval, carers will continue to be supported by Senior Social Work Assistants and have the opportunity to attend fostering support groups.

10. Training of Approved Foster Carers

- 10.1. Somerset Council Fostering Service provides a range of relevant training courses and development opportunities for foster carers in recognition of the complex and diverse needs of the children and young people that are being cared for. A training and development plan is agreed with foster carers and updated and regularly reviewed at a minimum of every 12 months. For more information on training and development post approval please see our Foster Carers Handbook, chapter on [Training and Development \(trixonline.co.uk\)](http://trixonline.co.uk), and for the current training plan, please see [The Learning Centre: Log in to the site \(learningpool.com\)](http://learningpool.com)
- 10.2. Prospective foster carers are given the opportunity to be matched with an experienced foster carer to support them in their role.

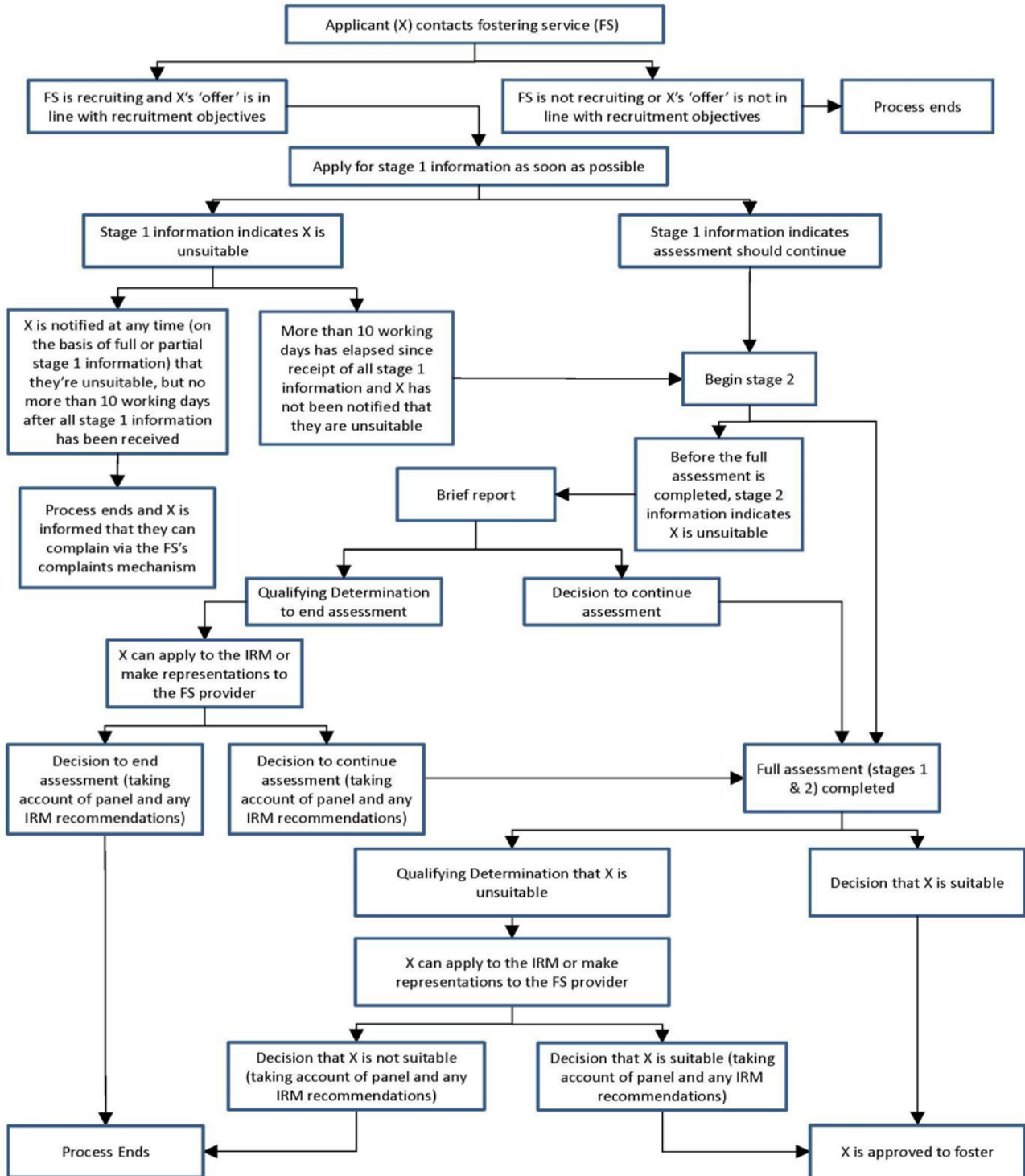
11. Independent Review Mechanism (IRM)

- 11.1. All applicants who proceed to stage 2 of the assessment process have the right to access the IRM. This may happen following a brief report being presented to the fostering panel and a decision being made to end the assessment at that stage. It may also happen after a full assessment has been completed and where a recommendation and decision to approve is not made. In both situations, the applicant can make representation to the Fostering Service Provider through the complaint's procedure. Further information can be found on the IRM here [Independent Review Mechanism - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).
- 11.2. Applicants who are notified at any time, but no more than 10 working days after the completion of stage 1, that they are unsuitable to foster (based on full or partial information instage 1 of the process) do not have access to the IRM but can complain via the fostering services complaints mechanism.

12. Appendix

Appendix 1: Stage 1 & 2: Foster Carer Assessment & Approval Process

Stages 1 and 2: Foster carer assessment & approval process



NB - This diagram illustrates how stages 1 & 2 of the assessment process fit together. It is not intended to cover all actions a FS must undertake as part of the process - FSs must refer to the regulations and statutory guidance for this information. It should be noted that at any point in the process applicants (1) can withdraw, in which case the process ends; and (2) can complain to the FS (and must be informed of their right to do so if they are turned down in stage 1).

Appendix 2: Checks & References

Key

Applicable to new applicants	
Applicable to new and transferring applicants	

Checks & References	Legal Framework	Somerset Process/Practice
Criminal Record Checks	<p>Legal Framework The Fostering Services (England) Regulation 26 2011 (legislation.gov.uk)</p> <p>The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, Schedule 3</p> <p>Fostering services: national minimum standards - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Applicants cannot be presented at panel without a DBS. There is no legal requirement to undertake DBS checks in relation to adults at other addresses. However, in line with best practice Somerset may request one in certain circumstances, for example, for a regular visitor to the household.</p>
Overseas Checks	<p>There is no statutory requirement to seek an additional record check from a foreign country in which the applicant was previously living. An overseas check can include a check with a police service or another country, or can be a certificate of good conduct from a state embassy or other recognised state agency.</p>	<p>A certificate of good conduct should be sought where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant has lived abroad for more than one year in one main country and the period in question is within the last 10 years.

Local Authority Checks	<p>The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 require the fostering service to take into account the views of the local authority in whose area the applicant lives. There is no legal requirement to undertake local authority checks in relation to previous addresses.</p> <p>Requests for checks must include applicants, children and any other adults living in the household, and any adult children who may have previously lived in the household.</p>	<p>Local authority checks will be requested for all addresses for the applicants' adult lifetime. Additional local authority checks covering childhood can be sought at the ASW's discretion and if considered relevant for informing the assessment.</p>
Personal References / Agency Reference	<p>Regulation 26(1A) and Schedule 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 require that the assessor interviews at least two persons nominated by the prospective foster carer and prepares a written report based on information gathered.</p> <p>Regulation 26(1A)(c) 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.</p>	<p>Referees should have known the applicants for a minimum of 5 years and be able to talk about their interactions with children. Where a couple is applying the referee should know them both and be able to comment on their relationship.</p> <p>One reference should be from a person not related to the applicants.</p> <p>Referees should be provided with a copy of the interview and ASW's analysis and sign to agree content.</p>
Former Partner Checks	<p>There is no statutory requirement to undertake checks with former partners, but the fostering service have discretion to do this under Regulation 26(2)(a) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 permits the fostering service provider to obtain any other information they consider relevant. Schedule 3 of those regulations requires information about applicants previous marriage or similar relationship, and so seeking former partner references may be seen as an appropriate way to gather this.</p>	<p>Ex-partner references will be sought for applicants where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the applicant has lived with a partner, whether or not that has involved jointly caring for children, and whatever the time period of the relationship. • The applicant has been married to, or parented a child with, a former partner, even if they were not living together at the same address. <p>Somerset will request ex-partner references and complete interviews for all applicants as outlined above unless to do so would place an applicant at risk.</p>

Birth Children References	Regulation 26(1A) and Schedule 3 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 require that the assessor interviews at least two persons nominated by the prospective foster carer and prepares a written report based on information gathered.	In addition to the 2 personal references completed the applicants birth children will be required to contribute their views as part of the assessment. Adult children will be required to provide a written reference and will be interviewed. Younger children's views will be sought by the ASW completing a home visit and meeting with them, this could include direct work or observations which are suitable to their age and development.
School, nursery and Health Visitor Checks	There is no statutory requirement to undertake a check with schools, nurseries or health visitors, but the fostering service have discretion to do this under Regulation 26(2)(a) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 permits the fostering service provider to obtain any other information they consider relevant. Schedule 3 requires particulars of the applicants children and information about the carer's skills, competence and potential relevant to their capacity to care for a child placed with them. Seeking health visitor and/ or school or nursery references may contribute to obtaining this information.	Somerset will routinely seek consent from applicants to request school, nursery and health visitor checks.
Employment and Voluntary Activity References / SSAFA Check	Regulation 26(2)(a) and Schedule 3, Part 2, para 14 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 (as amended) mention the assessment report needing to address 'past and present employment'. Although not specific as such, seeking an employers reference might be seen as one aspect of that wider requirement.	Somerset will seek employment references covering the last 5 years. If applicants work with children and vulnerable adults then references will be sought for each of those settings. This includes voluntary work. Where an applicant has served with British forces overseas, in line with good practice, Somerset may request a check to be undertaken with the organisation providing social services to that group. SSAFA (www.ssafa.org.uk/our-social-work-services).
Health Assessments	Regulation 26(1A) and Schedule 3, part 1 para 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011	All applicants are required to complete an AH form and attend a medical. The process includes:

	require details of the applicant's health, supported by a medical report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part A should be completed by the local authority and the entire form given to the applicant. • Part B should be completed by the applicant and the entire form given to the GP completing the assessment. • Part C should be completed by the GP undertaking the medical assessment and the entire form should then be sent to the medical advisor. • A medical summary will then be completed by the local authority's medical advisor to inform the applicants assessment.
Home Safety Checks	Regulation 26(1A) and Schedule 3, part, para 5 of the Fostering Service Regulations 2011 require an assessment of the applicant's accommodation. The guidance notes that the physical environment of the home should allow children to have their own private space, with places to keep their own belongings, do homework and see family and friends. Although technically not a legal requirement, The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 provide more guidance in Standard 10.	Household Risk Assessments will be undertaken for all applicants, any identified actions must be agreed and completed before attending fostering panel.
Dog and Pet Assessments	There is no statutory requirement for an assessment of dogs or pets in fostering households, however Regulation 26(2)(c) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 permits the fostering service provider to obtain any other information they consider relevant.	All dog and pet assessments will be completed by ASW's / SSWA's as part of the assessment. Where appropriate specialist dog assessments will be considered.
Financial Assessments	Fostering 26(1A) and Schedule 3, Part 2, para 14 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 make clear that the assessment report needs to address 'standards of living' and a financial assessment might be seen as one aspect of that.	All applicants will be required to complete a financial assessment which will be reviewed by their ASW as part of the assessment.

Social Media and Internet Checks	The law does not require social media and internet checks to be undertaken on fostering applicants. However, Regulation 26(2)(c) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 permits the fostering service provider to obtain any other information they consider relevant.	ASW will routinely complete social media and internet checks during the assessment. This will initially consist of using search engines and social media platforms to enter the name of the applicants or family members. Checks will only be in relation to public space on the internet.
Additional checks/ references ASW consider appropriate in respect of applicants fostering application.	Regulation 26(2)(a) of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 permits the fostering service provider to obtain any other information they consider relevant.	Additional checks at the discretion of the ASW in consultation with team manager to be discussed with applicants.

Appendix 3: Documents to be submitted to panel with Star Assessment:

(Please note that every document in the list may not be applicable to every applicant)

Documents	Attached to panel bundle Y/N	Date Completed / Location of document (e.g. LCS)	Outcome (Please provide details including who completed check, risks identified, actions taken and proposed future actions to mitigate the issue/risk)	Seen by Manager during QA process	Page
Family profile (for mainstream fostering)	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Family Tree	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Eco-Map	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Chronology	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Home Safety Checklist	N	LCS Forms	Panel require confirmation that the Home Safety Check has been completed and that any outstanding actions have been addressed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial Statement	N	Docs	Panel require confirmation that a Financial Statement has been completed. Including a figure	<input type="checkbox"/>	

			showing monthly surplus/deficit and comment of what this means for the applicant(s) in relation to fostering.		
Pet Questionnaires (if applicable)	N	LCS Forms	Panel require confirmation that Pet Questionnaires have been completed, including the social worker's analysis.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Safer Caring Family Agreement	N	LCS Forms	Panel need confirmation that it has been completed, with social work analysis to say that it is fit for purpose and that the applicant(s) understand it and their role within it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Behavioural Checklist	N	Docs	To be explored and analysed within the main body of the assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Personal Development Plan & Support Plan (PDP)	N	LCS Forms	Panel require confirmation that the PDP has been finalised and pre-approval training has been completed. Within the main assessment, the social worker should comment on the applicant(s) reflections on the training they have completed and their attitude and motivation towards ongoing professional development.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Trainer's Report from Skills to Foster Course	N	Docs	A summary of the trainers' report should be included within the main assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Original Birth Certificate	N	Case noted		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Passport verified or other certification of nationality	N	Case noted		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage Certificate (if applicable)	N	Case noted		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Divorce (Decree Absolute) (if applicable)	N	Case noted		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Local Authority Check	N	Docs	Panel need confirmation that Local Authority Checks have been completed, including details of the outcome. If the applicant(s) are known, this requires full exploration within the assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health (Medical Advisor Report)	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Social Media & Internet Check	N		To be addressed within the assessment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
DBS on all adults in household	N	Added to LCS checks tab	Panel require confirmation that DBS Checks have been completed and verified, with the date. Applicants cannot be presented at panel without DBS check.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

DBS Risk Assessment	Y	Docs	To be completed when awaiting DBS Checks for adult living in household (not applicants).	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Suitability Assessment Form	Y	Docs	To be completed when an applicant discloses criminal convictions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Certificate of Good Conduct or CoGC Risk Assessment.	Y	Docs	For applicants who have lived abroad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
SSAFA Check	N	Docs	For applicants who have served in the Armed Forces. Panel require confirmation that DBS Checks have been completed and verified, with the date.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Current Employer Reference	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Previous employer/s incl. voluntary (<i>if worked with children or vulnerable adults</i>)	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
School, nursery and Health Visitor Checks	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Previous Partner Reference	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Health Visitor Check	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Written Personal References	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Personal Refences/ Agency Reference - Interviews	Y	Docs CoramBAAF Form		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Written Interviews and analysis of discussions with all personal referees	Y	Docs CoramBAAF Form		<input type="checkbox"/>	
Any other relevant Risk Assessments or additional references. (If there are concerns, please include the full document in the bundle).	Y	Docs		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Statutory checks and documents authorised by a Practice Supervisor/Manager where indicated above.