



## **Children's Safeguarding and Family Help**

### **Family, Friends and Fostering Service**

#### **Assessment of foster carers practice guidance**

Camden's Children and Learning Directorate uses relational practice as the foundation for all our work. Our integrative relational practice framework is based on our values, and is designed to help achieve the Directorate's purpose: to work with children, families and communities to make a positive, lasting difference to their futures, so they have the best start in life.

We recognise the impact of structural inequalities on the lives of the children and families we work with and as a service we will embrace inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice based on our values and our mission to champion social justice.

Our practice framework centres on honest and compassionate relationships with those we serve and with each other. It is an expectation that all Directorate policies and procedures are implemented in line with our practice framework, and that any actions within policies and procedures reflect its ethics, values and practice expectations.

# Assessment of foster carers practice guidance

## 1 Introduction

- The Family, Friends and Fostering Service is responsible for the assessment of all prospective foster carers and keeps a register of all approved Camden foster carers. Camden's independent Fostering and Permanence Panel is responsible for making recommendations on the approval of foster carers with a final decision made by the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Family Help as agency decision maker.
- This document sets out the local procedures and practice guidance for assessing social workers and should be read together with the *Assessment and approval of foster carers* policy. [Assessment and Approvals of Foster Carers](#)

## 2 Roles and responsibilities

The recruitment and assessment of foster carers is a shared responsibility between the following:

- The marketing worker produces recruitment information and campaign materials and organises and attends the Fostering Open Evenings to facilitate provision of information on fostering to potential applicants.
- The recruitment social worker deals with all initial enquiries and supports applicants through Stage 1 of the assessment process, gathering information, answering queries, carrying out home visits and organising checks.
- The assessment social worker supports the applicant through Stage 2 of the process and carries out the fostering assessment, presenting their report to the Fostering and Permanence Panel.
- The Family, Friends and Fostering manager is responsible for oversight of all decisions throughout the recruitment and assessment process and should meet regularly to discuss applications make decisions on whether an applicant may progress to the next step of the process.

### 3 Foster carers transferring from other fostering providers

- If an applicant is currently or has previously been foster carer for another agency, they will be subject to the same assessment processes as new applicants. This information should be gathered at stage 1 and should inform decisions on whether or not to proceed with the stage 2 assessment.
- In these cases, Camden will have the power to request access to any records held about the applicant by the previous agency and this request should be complied with within 15 working days. Fostering agencies should provide any information which already exists about the applicant that is relevant to Camden's decision on whether or not to approve them as a Camden foster carer.
- Assessing social workers should contact the previous agency to obtain as much information as possible regarding the foster carer including:
  - the report of the original assessment of the applicant's suitability to foster
  - a copy of the last review conducted into their continued suitability to foster
  - details of any concerns regarding care standards
  - details of any allegations made against the foster carer and members of their household
  - any other relevant information.
- Although the information provided can be used to inform the stage 2 assessment it should not be solely relied on. Social workers should assess the quality and continuing relevance of all information provided before it is relied upon in assessment and should discuss the quality of information and seek advice from the manager and the Agency Advisor before deciding whether or not to rely on it for the purposes of assessment.

### 4 Recording

Work related to the assessment process must be fully recorded on MOSAIC using the fostering workflow so that it is clear that decisions are properly recorded, authorised and scrutinised at every stage of the process and that all information required by statute has been gathered and given due consideration when making decisions on suitability to foster.

## 5 Procedures for assessment

### Dealing with initial enquiries

- Initial enquiries from applicants who are interested in fostering may be made by telephone, email or at Fostering open evenings and details of applicants should be logged on to MOSAIC.
- Telephone and email enquiries should be dealt with by the Fostering duty social worker and passed to the recruitment social worker.
- The marketing worker attending the open evening should deal with enquiries made at the event, logging on details of attendees and pass this information on to the recruitment social worker.
- The recruitment social worker should provide applicants with basic information and advice on fostering and discuss with the applicant their motivation to foster.
- During the discussion, the recruitment social worker should try to obtain enough information from the applicant to see if they are able to meet the basic requirements for approval as a foster carer as set out in the eligibility criteria. [Fostering 1 - general information.doc](#)
- The recruitment social worker should also provide information about the approval process, including the need to carry out extensive checks including a social media check and searches against the applicant and their household, and discuss the needs of those children requiring fostering placements.
- Camden's fostering information pack should be given or sent out to applicants at the first enquiry. The pack contains a preliminary application form (FP1) which should be completed and returned to the Fostering Service.
- The pack also contains:
  - The Fostering Service information booklet
  - A freepost return envelope
  - Camden's diversity policy statement
  - Schedule of payments and allowances for Camden foster carers.

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- All initial enquiries should be recorded on the initial enquiries tracking database by the recruitment social worker. This is to ensure that all enquiries can be followed up. Enquirers by telephone or email should be given the dates of any forthcoming open evenings.
- Initial enquiries should also be recorded in the initial enquiry episode on MOSAIC, which contains the foster carer initial enquiry form. The form and the episode should be completed by the Recruitment social worker and should include a recommendation from them as to whether or not the applicant should be offered an initial home visit.
- The task should be sent to the manager for a decision on whether to continue with application and progress onto the initial home visit. If the decision is that the applicant cannot continue the recruitment social worker should draft a letter to the applicant to be signed by the team manager giving reasons for this.

### **Stage 1 Initial home visit**

- The purpose of the initial home visit is to meet with the applicant to obtain the information needed about them and members of their household to complete Stage 1 checks. During the visit, the Recruitment social worker should carry out an assessment of the accommodation to see if it is suitable. Initial home visits should take place within 14 days of the date of the initial enquiry.
- During the visit, the recruitment social worker should provide the applicant with information and advice on fostering and explore with them their motivation to foster and what they know of the fostering task.
- It is important that the applicant is given as much information about the Fostering Service's expectations of foster carers, and equally, the process for assessment and what preparation, training and support the applicant can expect from the service so that they are able to make an informed decision about whether or not to proceed with their application.
- Discussions with applicants should also be used to consider what the applicant feels they can offer Camden's looked after children and to establish whether they can meet the requirements of Camden's current recruitment strategy, for example in terms of ethnicity, working with older children etc. If an applicant does not meet the profile of carers currently required by

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Camden, fostering social workers can advise them to apply to other local authorities or fostering agencies.

- The initial home visit should also be used to meet other members of the household, and the visit should where possible coincide with a time when all household members are present, particularly the applicant's own children. However, if this is not possible, social workers should obtain as much information as possible about them and make arrangements to meet with them during the Stage 1 process.
  
- The initial home visit should be used to establish the following:
  - details of the household composition
  - the applicant's employment status and the security of their housing tenure
  - the suitability of the accommodation and whether the child will have their own bedroom
  - the status and duration of their current and previous relationships, particularly where there is a joint application to foster
  - details of any previous applications to foster, adopt or to become an early years provider
  - whether the applicant has been an approved foster carer within the previous 12 months and if so, details of their agency
  - details of the applicants three personal referees
  - what arrangements are to be made for the applicant's attendance at the Skills to Foster course.
  
- The recruitment social worker should record the outcome of the initial home visit on the initial home visit episode on MOSAIC and complete the initial home visit record. This should include a recommendation as to whether the applicant should continue with the process which should be discussed with the team manager.
  
- If it is decided to go ahead, the applicant should be given Form FP2 to complete and the recruitment social worker should begin taking out the required checks and making arrangements for a medical to be undertaken. The applicant should also be invited to attend the next scheduled Skills to Foster preparation group.

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- If it is decided that the applicant should not continue with the process, the recruitment social worker should draft a letter to the applicant to be signed by the team manager stating the reasons for this.

### Form FP2

- Form FP2 contains all the signed consents to checks required to be carried out as part of the assessment process. It should be given to the applicant to complete at the initial home visit, along with all required consent forms and the BAAF Form AH medical form. The applicant will be expected to produce their passport and any other relevant documents in order to prove their identity and support their DBS check.
- The completed form should be returned to the Business Support Service (BSS) to arrange for checks to be taken out in accordance with the division's "Checks and searches on alternative carers" policy (see below for link).  
[\Checks and searches on carers policy.doc](#)
- The BSS should check returned application forms to ensure that it has been completed correctly and that all information regarding nominated referees, employers, former partners and adult children has been included.

### Accommodation and health and safety checks

- As part of the Stage 1 checks, the recruitment social worker must visit the applicant's home and assess whether it is likely to meet the standards of accommodation as set out in Standard 10 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering. The accommodation should:
  - provide adequate space for everyone living there including any fostered child
  - be free from any hazards, including pets
  - be warm and adequately furnished and decorated
  - present a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene.
- The recruitment social worker should also advise the applicant with regard to any issues regarding the physical environment of the home and anything that may mean that their application cannot go forward.

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- The recruitment social worker should seek advice from the Fostering manager as to whether any changes need to be made to the accommodation in order to ensure children are living in a safe and suitable environment.
- A full health and safety check of the premises will be carried out by the assessing social worker as part of the Stage 2 assessment based on the health and safety checklist shown at appendix 3.

### Preparation group

- Camden's Skills to Foster preparation group is the main pre-approval training and information session provided to applicants and is based on the Fostering Network's "Skills to Foster" materials covering:
  - role and responsibilities of foster carers
  - safeguarding looked after children
  - managing difficult behaviour
  - managing and promoting contact
  - equalities and valuing diversity
  - health and safety
  - working with children who have been abused
  - working with parents
  - safe caring
  - allegations against foster carers
  - confidentiality and recording information
  - personal development and training
- Each session is facilitated by the recruitment social worker, with experienced foster carers available to provide further help and advice. Depending on the number of applicants, the course is run four times a year, or more frequently if required, and runs over three days.
- Attendance is mandatory for all applicants, who must attend all three days, and joint applicants should attend together. If applicants miss any of the days, the recruiting social worker must make every effort to enable them to catch up, including accessing preparation groups run by partners in the North London Fostering Consortium, so that the applicant can proceed to Stage 2.



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- The recruitment social worker should provide applicants with any written materials on the course, such as the course content. This information should be recorded on the preparation group episode on MOSAIC, and all relevant documents uploaded.
- The preparation group should give applicants an opportunity to explore the possible impact of fostering on themselves and their family, and how their own experiences and parenting skills can be directly applied to the fostering task.
- Social workers who are facilitating the preparation group should take notes based on their observation of how the applicant has participated in the group. These should be recorded on the MOSAIC record and should include a recommendation on whether applicant should continue with the Stage 2 assessment. The report should be shared with the Fostering manager as part of the decision-making process at the end of Stage 1.
- Within two weeks of the end of the preparation group, the recruitment social worker and assessment social worker should meet with the applicant to discuss their participation in the group, whether they wish to continue the process and to discuss the Family, Friends and Fostering service decision about their ability to become a foster carer and if their application can continue.
- If the application is to continue, the applicants should be referred to the Allocation meeting to confirm the decision to proceed and finalise arrangements for the assessment to begin, including the name of the assessing social worker.
- If it is decided that the applicant should not continue with the process, the recruiting social worker should draft a letter to the applicant to be signed by the team manager stating the reasons for this.

### Checks and searches

The full procedures for taking out checks and searches against applicants are set out in the *Checks and searches on alternative carers* policy which contains the responsibilities of the BSS and fostering social workers in relation to requesting checks and following up information provided.

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### Decisions on stage 1

- Decisions on stage 1 must be taken by the Fostering manager within 10 working days of all information and the outcome of checks being received and should be based on:
  - the outcome of statutory checks and medicals
  - the record of the home visit and the recommendation made by the social worker conducting the visit
  - the outcome of the assessment of the applicants accommodation and health and safety checks
  - the recommendation of the social worker facilitating the preparation group
  - the report of interviews with the applicant's referees
  - where applicable, information obtained from the applicant's previous fostering agency.
  
- When making a decision, the manager should look at whether the following criteria have been met:
  - The applicant and their household meet Camden's eligibility criteria.
  - The applicant has not been barred from fostering.
  - There are no safeguarding concerns regarding the applicant or adult members of the applicant's household.
  - The accommodation meets the standards required for fostering.
  - The applicant fully understands the fostering task and the role and responsibility of foster carers.
  - The applicant fully understands and can adhere to Camden's equality and valuing diversity policies.
  - The applicant has the required skills and attitudes to care for a looked after child.
  - There are no personal circumstances that may impact on the applicant's ability to care for a looked after child.
  
- The manager's decision should be recorded on the applicant's MOSAIC record. Where the decision is that the applicant is not suitable, the reasons why must be clearly stated. The recruitment social worker should then contact the applicant and explain why the decision not to proceed has been taken. The manager should also write to the applicant to confirm the decision.

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- There is no right to appeal using the Independent Review Mechanism from stage 1 decisions and applicants who are unhappy with the decision may only complain via Camden's complaints system if they feel the way in which the enquiries were conducted is flawed.

### Stage 2 assessment

- All prospective foster carers must be assessed by a suitably qualified social worker with experience of fostering and family placements work; please see the *Assessment and approval of foster carers* policy for details of what needs to be covered in the assessment.
- Although the Stage 2 assessment can begin at the same time that stage 1 checks are being carried out, the assessment will end if the decision from stage 1 checks is that the applicant and/or their household are unsuitable to foster following the outcome of these checks.
- The outcome of the assessment will be recorded in the BAAF Form F1 and presented to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for a recommendation on approval. The final decision on approval is made by the CSFH Director as agency decision maker.
- Alongside this assessment a home safe caring assessment will also be completed. Assessing social workers should also carry out a pet assessment on any animal kept in the house.
- Where the assessment is to be carried out by an independent social worker, it is the responsibility of the fostering manager to ensure that the independent worker has the requisite skills, and to seek verification of their qualifications.
- As soon as practicable, the allocated assessing social worker should contact the applicant and arrange to meet with them to begin the assessment.
- It is recommended that as much of the assessment as possible is carried out at the applicant's home so that assessing social workers can observe the family and how it functions.
- The assessing social worker should draw up a plan with the applicant detailing any meetings and areas of work to be covered during the assessment. The plan should also include details of any reading or other tasks that the applicant will be expected to do as part of the assessment.

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- Where a couple are being assessed, the plan should include at least 6 joint sessions and 2 individual sessions. All members of the applicant's household, particularly children, must be seen separately on at least one occasion and interviewed as appropriate to their age and understanding regarding how they feel fostering may affect them. Where it is appropriate, household members and children should be interviewed alone.
- After each session, the assessing social worker should record all information gathered, any conclusions drawn from the information, any new issues that have arisen and how these issues will be dealt with, including how the home study plan may need to change as a result of them.
- In the case of a couple, the assessing social worker should consider whether the relationship is stable and permanent and whether it has the strength to withstand the demands that fostering may bring.
- This applies whether the couple are married, have entered into a civil partnership or are two people, including same sex couples, who are living as partners in an enduring family relationship.

### Analysing information

- Assessing social workers should consider all information gathered throughout the fostering assessment process, including assessments of the applicant made at initial home visits and during preparation group training.
- It is likely that during assessment, applicants may not fully meet all aspects of the fostering standards, but assessing social workers should consider their potential to develop these abilities.
- If at any time during the assessment, information comes to light that raises concerns about the applicant's suitability to foster, assessing social workers should try to clarify the information with other information sources, for example further referees. They should also discuss concerns with the applicant.
- If concerns remain unresolved, these should be discussed with the Fostering manager, who should make a decision as to whether or not to continue with the assessment. Before making a decision, the Fostering manager may wish to discuss the matter with the Fostering and Permanence Panel chair or the agency advisor.

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- If the Fostering manager decides not to continue with the assessment, they should write to the applicant confirming this decision and the reasons, and this should be recorded on MOSAIC.

### 3.4 Completing the Form F report

- BAAF Form F should be used to record all the information gathered during the assessment and as an analysis tool to help reach conclusions as to the applicant's suitability to foster.
- The purpose of the Form F report is:
  - To provide the Fostering and Permanence Panel with enough information to decide on whether or not to approve the applicant as a Camden foster carer
  - To provide the Fostering Service with enough information about the carer to appropriately match them with a Looked After Child requiring a placement.
- The report should represent an open, honest account of the applicant's skills and attributes that will help them with the fostering task and any difficulties they may face, and conclude with a recommendation regarding approval.
- The report should:
  - be evidence-based
  - be set out clearly
  - provide a professional analysis and assessment of what the applicant's have to offer a fostered child
  - provide clear reasons for the final recommendation.
- Assessing social workers should also summarise any comments from Camden's medical advisor on the state of the applicant's health in the relevant part of Form F.
- Prior to completion of the Form F it may be deemed appropriate that another member of the Fostering team visit the applicant and their family in order to gain a second opinion on suitability. This visit should then be discussed with the Fostering manager.

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- All Form F reports should be uploaded onto MOSAIC and a task sent to the senior practitioner to check and authorise. Once the report has been authorised, the assessing social worker should share the report with the applicant and ask them to comment; their views should be recorded on the appropriate part of the Form F report.
- Information provided by third parties, such as the outcome of local authority checks and references **must not** be shared with the applicant.
- Following consultation with the applicant, the responsible senior practitioner should complete the Assessment episode on MOSAIC and refer the matter to the Fostering and Permanence Panel.

## 6 Re-assessment of foster carers

### Purpose of re-assessment

- There are various situations in which the Fostering Service will need to re-assess existing foster carers in order to ensure that the placement continues to offer high standards of care and can safeguard and promote the welfare of CLA.
- The purpose of re-assessment is to measure the impact of the changes or events on the foster carer's ability to continue to look after the children in their care and whether they should remain Camden foster carers. All re-assessments will be referred to the Fostering and Permanence Panel for re-consideration.
- Decisions to re-assess a carer may arise from significant changes in their circumstances and will normally be recommended by the carer's supervising social worker, although the Fostering manager is responsible for authorising re-assessments.
- In general, re-assessment will always take place in the following circumstances:
  - Where joint foster carers divorce or separate, and one wishes to continue to foster as a single foster carer, re-assessment should look at whether the remaining carer is able to cope as a single carer for the children in the placement and whether their terms of approval will need to be varied to reflect the change of status.

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- Where a foster carer returns to fostering after a break of more than a year, a re-assessment must be carried. This is to help the carer catch up with any new developments in fostering and identify any areas of training and development that need to be addressed in order to ensure the foster carer can provide the required standard of care for CLA.
- Where, following complaints that have been dealt with either through the child protection system or care standards procedures, concerns remain about the foster carer's ability to look after CLA to the required standard, the Fostering manager may request that the foster carer is re-assessed to establish whether or not the carer remains suitable to foster.

### **Assessing a foster carer's new partner**

- When a foster carer enters a significant relationship with a new partner, it is clear that this will have a major impact on the fostering household and in order to safeguard children placed with the carer, Fostering Services will need to carry out a further assessment.
- The possibility of an assessment being carried out on future partners should be discussed with single applicants to foster care during their initial assessment and with newly-single carers when assessed following divorce or separation.
- In both these situations, supervising social workers should let foster carers know that they must inform the Fostering Service if they do enter a significant relationship as this will have implications for safe caring.
- There may be some difficulty regarding the timing of such an assessment as this will depend on whether the carer regards the relationship as reaching a significant point, but the supervising social worker should discuss with the carer how the relationship may impact on aspects of safe caring.
- Appendix 1 sets out the assessment process for new partners, which follows a 4 stage assessment that reflects the partner's level of involvement in the fostering household. Timing of each level of assessment will depend on how the relationship is developing.

## Assessment of foster carers practice guidance

### Appendix 1

#### Assessment of foster carer's new partner

Stage	Action/assessment
Stage 1: Initial stages of relationship with no contact with fostering household	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster carer notifies supervising social worker of relationship</li> <li>• Social worker and foster carer discuss need for assessment and when it may be carried out</li> <li>• Social worker recommends that the foster carer informs the new partner of the possible need for assessment</li> </ul>
Stage 2: New partner visits the foster home and has contact with foster children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster carer must supervise contact between new partner and foster child and not leave the child alone.</li> <li>• Within 1 month of the new partner visiting the foster home, they should meet with the supervising social worker to discuss possible assessment</li> <li>• Social worker should carry out a DBS check</li> <li>• Child's social worker should speak to the child to gain their understanding/views regarding the new partner</li> </ul>
Stage 3: New partner visits and stays over at the foster home when the foster children are in placement; unsupervised contact may be occurring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DBS check must be complete</li> <li>• A local authority check must be carried out</li> <li>• References should be requested and taken up (including ex-partners and employers where the new partner works with children)</li> <li>• New partner should sign a confidentiality agreement and given information on the allegations procedures</li> <li>• The safe care plan and risk assessment should be updated to inform the new partner of potential risks</li> <li>• The supervising social worker should discuss with the new partner the expectations on how involved they can be regarding child care</li> </ul>
Stage 4: New partner moves into the foster home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment must begin with a view to approval by the Panel</li> <li>• Part one of form F to be completed</li> <li>• Medical checks to be completed (and any outstanding statutory checks)</li> <li>• Part two brief report to be written for panel covering childhood background, previous relationships, relationship with own and carers children, relationship with carer, relationship with foster child, commitment to fostering, competencies</li> <li>• Partner to attend <i>Skills to Foster</i> training</li> </ul>



## Appendix 2 Health and Safety Checklist

For off-agency only Def

<b>Name of applicant/s</b>		<b>Home telephone no</b>	
<b>Home address</b>			

### Introduction

Foster homes need to be safe for children and young people to live in. It is the responsibility of the fostering service to ascertain, as far as is reasonably possible, that the foster home fulfils acceptable safety standards. In line with National Care Standards (particularly Care Standard 6) the form below is designed to provide evidence that children will be cared for in a home where they will be safe from foreseeable harm to their health and safety.

The Health & Safety Checklist below contains questions about hazards that may exist in any home. Arguably, the duty of care is as high, if not higher, in the foster care situation. The checklist provides a basic assessment of whether the home poses any health and safety risks to the child. The form should be completed in two stages. Part 1 should be completed solely by the responsible social worker after the completion of Part 2. Part 2 of the form is intended to be completed in partnership with the prospective foster carer(s). In practical terms, it is likely to be useful to provide prospective carers with a copy of the whole form prior to visiting the actual home. This preview will allow the prospective carer(s) a chance to consider the questions included on the form. The fact that a particular hazard has not been addressed at the time of the visit should not specifically exclude a prospective carer(s). It may be possible to quickly remedy a perceived health and safety shortcoming. The social worker involved is not expected to be an expert in all the hazards covered by the form. However, it will be necessary to visit relevant areas of the home in order to make an informed assessment. The social worker, with the co-operation of the prospective carer(s), may find it necessary to examine documents or specific items in the home. This form should be completed taking into account both the age and special needs of a child to be placed in the home. As a general rule children under the age of eight will be less aware of health and safety hazards. This health and safety assessment should be reviewed on an annual basis or in the light of significant change.

### Part 1 General household conditions (for completion only by responsible social worker)

<b>General condition for assessment</b>	<b>Yes / No</b>	<b>If 'No', please state if not applicable (N/A) or if any improvements are required for this placement, who will undertake them and by when.</b>
Does the house appear to be maintained in a reasonable state of repair and decoration?	Yes / No	
Does the accommodation offer suitable space/room for the number and age of children placed there?	Yes / No	
Is the accommodation suitable for children with physical disabilities who may require more space?	Yes / No	
Are there physical barriers in the home restricting the movement of disabled children who require essential aids (eg wheelchair)?	Yes / No	
Is there sufficient indoor space to allow children to complete quiet activities (eg reading or homework)?	Yes / No	
Is there sufficient outdoor space for the children to play/engage in boisterous activities within the perimeter of the home?	Yes / No	
Do the rooms in the house have adequate natural ventilation?	Yes / No	
Do all the rooms have the facility to be maintained at a reasonable temperature for the expected level of activity?	Yes / No	

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Does the accommodation have provision for children to eat meals in a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere (eg a designated eating area)?	Yes / No	
Does the accommodation appear clean and free from strong odours (eg pets, cigarettes, urine, rubbish)?	Yes/No	
Is the home free from any other particular or obvious hazard(s) not covered here (eg building work)?	Yes/No	

### Part 2 General Safety (for completion by the prospective carer and social worker)

#### Area of enquiry

If 'No', please state if not applicable (N/A) or if any improvements are required for this placement, who will undertake them and by when.

### Indoors

Are gas fires and water heaters serviced yearly (eg receipts or maintenance contract)?	Yes / No	
Is electrical equipment in good repair (ie no worn leads or DIY cable-joining)?	Yes/No	
Are electrical plug sockets sensibly loaded (eg adapters are not full with plugs and being used for appliances with heating elements)?	Yes / No	
Does the electrical circuit have a trip device fitted?	Yes / No	
Are room lights flicker free; no buzzing noise from sockets; no frequent tripping of circuit board or main fuse replacement?	Yes / No	
Where appropriate, are child resistant safety covers fitted on accessible power points?	Yes / No	
Are heating appliances securely fixed to the wall?	Yes / No	
If applicable, are fireguards available and will they be used?	Yes / No	
Are downstairs doors kept closed at night?	Yes / No	
Are all window and door keys easily available in the event of fire?	Yes / No	
Are smoke detectors fitted and do they work? (Can the prospective carer demonstrate by pressing test button?)	Yes / No	
Have large areas of glass (particularly below one meter) that may pose a risk to a child been fitted with safety glass/been laminated/are safe by virtue of location?	Yes / No	
Are floors free of any loose or uneven floor coverings that may be a tripping hazard?	Yes/No	
Is the composition of suites and sofas flame-resistant?	Yes / No	
Does furniture appear to be in safe and good repair?	Yes / No	
If appropriate, do opening windows have suitable safety features (eg restrictors or locks)?	Yes / No	
Is there adequate artificial/natural light to illuminate any steps or staircases?	Yes / No	
If applicable, have stair banisters been filled in or have a maximum four- inch gap between rails?	Yes / No	
If applicable, has a stair gate been fitted?	Yes / No	
Are there cellars? If so, how is access to them restricted?	Yes/No	
Are materials such as alcohol, cigarettes, matches and lighters kept out of reach?	Yes / No	
Are glassware, china and other fragile objects kept out of reach?	Yes / No	
Does the home have a first aid box or are first aid supplies available?	Yes / No	

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Do push chairs, buggies and child equipment have a BS kite mark or CE mark (*see end of page 4)?	Yes/No	
If appropriate, do front and back doors have locks that are out of reach or have child-proof locks fitted?	Yes/No	
Do curtains have tie back cords. If so, confirm that they have been removed	Yes/No	

### Specific areas of accommodation

Area of enquiry		If 'No', please state if not applicable (N/A) or if any improvements are required for this placement, who will undertake them and by when.
Is there an easily accessible fire blanket/extinguisher?	Yes / No	
Are electrical leads to appliances, especially kettles, short and out of reach of young children?	Yes / No	
Are knives and other utensils kept out of reach of young children or those with special needs?	Yes / No	
Where appropriate, are child proof locks fitted to cupboards?	Yes / No	
Where appropriate, is a cooker guard fitted?	Yes / No	
Are kitchen work surfaces and flooring undamaged and kept clean?	Yes / No	
Is food appropriately stored (ie raw meat below cold meats, food covered, etc) and the fridge kept at a suitable temperature (eg is there a fridge thermometer)?	Yes / No	
Are harmful or poisonous chemical substances (eg bleach) kept stored in their original containers away from reach?	Yes / No	
If appropriate, are chest freezers kept closed and locked?	Yes/No	
If appropriate, is access to the kitchen restricted (eg safety gate) or will the child be routinely supervised?	Yes / No	
Are electrical switches outside the actual bathroom?	Yes / No	
Are pull cord switches used to control lights or electric fires situated away from likely splash areas?	Yes / No	
Are potentially harmful substances and equipment (eg medicines, shampoos, cosmetics and razors) locked away out of reach?	Yes / No	
Is there a thermostat on the hot water control to prevent scalding?	Yes / No	
Is there a lock on the door? (Is it out of reach of small children? If necessary, can it be defeated from outside?)	Yes / No	
Where appropriate, can the temperature of water in a filled bath be tested prior to use?	Yes / No	
Will the child/young person have his or her own bed/cot?	Yes / No	
If bunk beds are to be used, is there a safe means to access and leave the bunk?	Yes / No	
Does the bunk bed have guards to prevent an occupant from rolling/falling out?	Yes / No	
If children will be sharing a bedroom, will a risk assessment be	Yes / No	

## Assessment of foster carers practice guidance

undertaken?

Are mattresses in good condition?

Yes / No

Does the cot cot/bed appear sound and safe to use? (is there a BS kite mark or CE mark? \*see end of page 4)

Yes / No

### Specific areas of accommodation *continued*

#### Area of enquiry

If 'No', please state if not applicable (N/A) or if any improvements are required for this placement, who will undertake them and by when.

Are garden tools and DIY equipment locked away or kept out of sight and reach?

Yes / No

Are garden chemicals either locked away or kept out of sight and reach?

Yes / No

Are garden fences and gates secure and in good condition?

Yes / No

Are swing, slides, etc, securely fixed and kept in good condition?

Yes/No

Are garages and sheds locked when not in use?

Yes / No

Are any glass structures (eg greenhouses) fenced off?

Yes/No

Are any water features securely covered or securely fenced off?

Yes/No

Are sand pits covered when not in use (for hygiene reasons)?

Yes/No

Are outdoor electrical connections fitted with a trip device?

Yes/No

Is the garden area kept free from animal litter and rubbish?

Yes/No

Has the outdoor area been checked with carers for potentially harmful plant? Separate list and recommendations given to clients?

Yes/No

Are there any pets in the accommodation?  
Separate Pet Questionnaire completed

Yes/No

Is it reasonable to assume that these pets pose no physical threat to a child?

Yes/No

Are sleeping and feeding arrangements for pets well managed and hygienic?

Yes/No

Do infant or child car seats have a BS kite mark or CE mark? \*(see bottom of this page)

Yes/No

Are child seats approved for that particular vehicle? (Evidence may be found in the manufacturer's manual).

Yes/No

Is there evidence of fully comprehensive insurance and, if applicable, a current MOT certificate?

Yes/No

Do drivers hold valid driving licences?

Yes/No

Is the vehicle maintained on a regular basis?

Yes/No

Is the vehicle suitable for a child with special needs?

Yes/No

Do you own firearms

Yes/No

Why do you own firearms?

Yes/No

Where are they stored?

Yes/No

# Assessment of foster carers practice guidance

Who has access?

Yes/No

Do you have a Firearms Certificate?  
(You will need to provide a copy)

Yes/No

Please list the Firearms you own

Yes/No

Signature of applicant

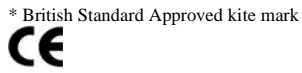
Date

Signature of assessor

Date

Please print name

Review date



The CE sign states that the product is declared as conforming to European standards

### Appendix 3

#### **Rules on gun buying in the UK**

To buy a shotgun in Britain you need to hold a Shotgun Certificate, and to buy a rifle you need to hold a Fire Arm Certificate. You can ask for forms for these from your local police station.

Ask also to speak to your local police firearms liaison officer, who will tell you what you need to fill those forms out to his or her satisfaction. They may also want to see a 'good reason' for you wanting a gun, such as membership of a clay shooting club or pest control. They usually want to see that you will keep your gun or guns in a secure place, such as a steel gun cabinet bolted to a wall. You have to store ammunition separately.

A shotgun is described as a smooth-bore gun (not being an air-weapon) which has a barrel not less than 24 inches with a bore diameter not exceeding 2 inches. A firearm usually describes a cartridge-loading, rifled-barrel longarm (rifle) with a barrel not shorter than 300mm. Overall length of the firearm must not be less than 600mm unless it is a muzzle loader. Firearms include: muzzle-loading rifles or pistols; shotguns with a magazine capacity greater than three; airguns with power ratings exceeding 12 ft/lbs for rifles and 6ft/lbs for pistols; and historic pistols kept at home as part of a collection or kept at a designated historic site and used for non-competitive target practice.

People who apply for a Firearm Certificate for a rifle or muzzle-loading pistol from 1 October 1997 need to be a member of a rifle or muzzle-loading pistol club approved by the Home Office or Scottish Office under the Firearms Acts if they intend to use the gun for target shooting only. Muzzle loaders are now the only legal useable handguns available to UK shooters (apart from the historic cartridge firing handguns kept at designated sites). However, in order to conduct your shooting you will need a supply of blackpowder which as a classified explosive, has its own restrictions requiring the acquisition of a blackpowder certificate from your police force.

You have to be aged 17 or over to have a Firearms Certificate. If you are aged less than 17 you can have a Shotgun Certificate as long as you have your parent's signed permission. You must be aged 17 or over to purchase an airgun and ammunition. If you are aged between 14 and 17 years, you may borrow a gun or have one bought for you by someone aged 17 or over, and you may use it without supervision on private property where you have a right to be. If you are under 14 you may use an airgun on private property but you must be supervised by someone over the age of 21 at all times. It is unlawful for an under-14-year-old to possess a gun and ammunition without supervision.

## Assessment of foster carers practice guidance

It is an offence to fire a gun within 50 feet of a roadway, public footpath or bridleway if by doing so any member of the public is endangered. It is an offence to carry a loaded gun in a public place without good reason. A gun may be considered loaded even if the bullets (or pellets in the case of air rifles) are in a detached magazine.

These were just the rules we had got used to. From 1997, firearm and shotgun certification became more stringent. Among the extra hurdles, people who now apply for Firearms Certificates have to provide two referees, and the police are able to revoke a Firearms Certificate in cases where the holder no longer has a good reason to possess firearms or ammunition.

Certain types of firearm are hard to obtain in Britain without a stringent Home Office licence. These include automatic weapons and most handguns.

The 1997 handgun ban also made buying any gun more difficult. These transactions have to take place face to face rather than by mail-order, as before. The 1997 Firearms (Amendment) Act made it illegal to send to any individual who is not a Registered Firearms Dealer a gun that requires a certificate or any metallic ammunition of .22 calibre and above. This also applies to transfers of ammunition which requires a Firearms Certificate. It does not apply to shotgun cartridges.

Guns can, however, be sent by a Registered Firearms Dealer (i.e. any gun shop) to another RFD. If you buy your guns mail order you will either have to set up a relationship with a friendly local RFD or be prepared to travel. This site will help you find an RFD in every area of the UK.

Not all RFD holders will be happy to accept guns that have been retailed by other dealers and all are perfectly entitled to levy a charge for this service.

## Appendix 4: Fostering assessment flowchart

### Stage 1

