



**Children's Safeguarding and
Social Work**

Assessment of foster carers

CONTENTS

Page no:

1. Introduction		
1.1	The fostering assessment process	2
1.2	Roles and responsibilities	3
1.3	Foster carers transferring from other providers	3
1.4	Recording	4
2. Stage 1		
2.1	Stage 1 overview	5
2.2	Dealing with initial enquiries	5
2.3	Initial home visit	7
2.4	Form FP2	8
2.5	Accommodation and health and safety checks	9
2.6	Preparation group	9
2.7	Checks and searches	11
2.8	Referees	13
2.9	Decision on stage 1	14
3. Stage 2		
3.1	Overview of Stage 2	16
3.2	Formal assessment	16
3.3	Analysing information	19
3.4	Completing Form F	20
4. Assessment practice guidance		
4.1	Assessment of family and friends carers	21
4.2	Re-assessment of foster carers	21
Appendix 1:	Assessing new partners schedule	19
Appendix 2:	Health and safety checklist	20
Appendix 3:	Gun ownership laws	25

1 Introduction

1.1 The fostering assessment process

The 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 Social Work as agency decision maker.

The preparation and assessment of prospective foster carers is governed by Part 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and related statutory guidance, standard 13 of the National Minimum Standards, and the Fostering Network Code of Practice. Camden also uses the British Association of Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) resources for the assessment process, in particular the Form F1 assessment record.

The purpose of Camden's fostering assessment and approval process is to ensure that applicants are selected on the basis of their suitability and competence to foster, following a rigorous process that develops their understanding of fostering and ensures that they are able to promote the safety and welfare of fostered children.

The assessment and approval of foster carers is a two-stage process:

- Stage 1 focuses on establishing the applicant's suitability to foster and includes collation of basic information and carrying out checks to ensure that they are not barred from being a foster carer and to inform any decision on continuing with the assessment process;
- Stage 2 involves the in-depth assessment of the applicant's relevant skills and knowledge to establish whether they are capable of providing a high level of care to meet the needs of looked after children.

Although the two stages can run concurrently, information from Stage 1 must be sought immediately and a decision taken on whether to continue with the Stage 2 assessment taken within 10 working days of all Stage 1 checks being completed and relevant information received.

Camden aims to complete fostering assessments and present applications to the Fostering and Permanence Panel within 8 months of the applicant's initial enquiry.

1.2 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 Fostering manager and senior practitioner are jointly 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.

1.3 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 Fostering Manager or senior practitioner and the Agency Advisor before deciding whether or not to rely on it for the purposes of assessment.

In particular, consideration should be given to references from referees, employers or previous partners and whether these need to be repeated. Statutory guidance states that where an applicant has been a foster carer in the last 12 months and their previous agency provides a written reference there is no requirement to interview personal referees.

However it is Camden's policy that social workers discuss this with the Fostering manager or senior practitioner in order to decide whether these interviews need to be carried out again in order to gather relevant information and clarify outstanding issues.

1.4 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.

2 Stage 1

2.1 Stage 1 overview

Stage 1 involves gathering information about the applicant and their household and carrying out statutory checks to establish the general suitability of the applicant and their household to foster.

The following tasks should be carried out in Stage 1 in order to inform the decision about whether to progress the Stage 2 assessment:

- gathering the information listed in Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Fostering Regulations (see Appendix 1 for a detailed list) including a medical report
- carrying out statutory checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), local authority and health services
- carrying out a home visit to check the suitability of the accommodation
- interviewing personal referees
- obtaining information from previous fostering agencies
- arranging attendance at and supporting applicants through Camden's Fostering Preparation Group.

At the end of Stage 1, the Fostering manager will make a decision on the applicant's suitability and whether the Stage 2 assessment should progress. The decision should be taken within 10 working days of all checks being completed and relevant information obtained.

2.2 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.

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 or responsible senior practitioner 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.

2.3 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 (see appendix 1). 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 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.

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.

2.4 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.

2.5 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.

The recruitment social worker should seek advice from the Fostering manager or senior practitioner 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.

2.6 Preparation group

2.6.1 General information

The Skills to Foster preparation group is the main pre-approval training and information session provided to applicants. It is overseen by a senior practitioner and 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.

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.

2.6.2 Purpose

The main purpose of the preparation group is to provide applicants with basic information about fostering that gives them the basic skills and knowledge to care for looked after children. However, the group also provides the fostering service with an opportunity to assess applicants on their suitability to foster and will inform the final decision made at the end of Stage 1 as to whether the applicant can continue with the Stage 2 assessment.

Observation of applicants in group situations can provide valuable insight into their communications skills and their general attitudes to all aspects of childcare. Group work can provide social workers with evidence of an applicant's strengths and any areas of concern that may require more support or training.

Camden's preparation group is based on the Fostering Network's "Skills to Foster" materials, and follows the format of the TSDS pre-approval training. The training covers the following areas:

- 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

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.

2.6.3 Outcomes

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 Fostering Team's 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.

2.7 Checks and searches

The requirements for checks that need to be taken out on prospective foster carers in order to ensure the child's safety within the fostering household can be found in Schedule 3 of the Fostering Regulations 2011. The outcome of these checks will inform the decision on whether or not to continue with the Stage 2 assessment.

The full procedures for taking out checks and searches against applicants are set out in the division's "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.

Fostering social workers must refer to this policy when taking out checks on prospective foster carers; the following information in this section is supplemental information only.

2.7.1 Medical checks

All applicants must have a written report from their GP in order to demonstrate that they are fit enough to be able to carry out the fostering task. This includes obtaining information about their physical and emotional health and how it may affect their ability to care for a looked after child.

A medical check could be requested at the beginning of the process if applicants share information which means their health could impact upon their ability to care for children.

The recruitment social worker should discuss this with the Fostering manager or senior practitioner and seek the advice of Camden's medical advisor with regards to any medical being carried out.

2.7.2 DBS checks

DBS checks should be taken out against the applicant and members of their household aged 16 years and over before assessments can begin. Please refer to the "Checks and searches on alternative carers" policy for full procedures.

Where an applicant has lived abroad within the last 10 years, checks should be requested from their country of residence via International Social Services or the relevant consulate.

If it is difficult to gather any background information on an applicant who has lived abroad for some time, the Fostering manager must make a decision on whether to terminate the application.

Social workers should refer to the eligibility criteria for details of convictions and cautions that will de-bar applicants from being assessed as prospective foster carers. If, during the course of assessment, it becomes known that an applicant or any adult member of their household has such a conviction or caution, they must be notified immediately that their application cannot be taken any further, stating the reasons why.

Social workers should note that information regarding DBS checks may only be shared with the person to whom it relates. This means that where a joint applicant or a household member is found to have relevant convictions or cautions, social workers cannot give applicants the reason for not progressing with the application. This would need to be the decision of the joint applicant or household member.

The police may also share “soft information” (also known as additional information) if a chief police officer has authorised its disclosure. Soft information is details of police involvement with an applicant which did not lead to prosecution or conviction. This information is confidential and cannot be shared with the applicant, but should be considered in view of the application.

Where a DBS disclosure or any other matter comes to light during the period of formal assessment that suggests that an applicant is not suitable to foster, they must be informed immediately that their application cannot be taken further.

2.7.3 DBS checks for adults outside the fostering household

Many foster carers have a support network of family and friends who may help with the care of the fostered child. The following guidance from the Department of Education sets out when it is necessary for fostering services to request DBS checks on backup carers and babysitters.

Generally, DBS checks should only be requested where the individual has regular, unsupervised access to the child. The decision should be taken by the social worker based on an assessment of risk to the child which looks at:

- the extent to which the individual will be alone with the child
- the regularity of contact
- any relevant restrictions in the child’s care plan, court order or foster placement agreement
- the foster carer’s own knowledge of the person and their household
- any factors that may make the child more vulnerable
- what is known about the person and their household.

2.8 Referees

The recruitment social worker must meet with the applicant’s three nominated referees and write up a report of these interviews as part of the Stage 1 process.

Referees must be someone who has known the applicant for a minimum of 5 years and only one may be a member of the applicant’s family. For joint applications, the referee must have known both applicants for the required period; if not, a more suitable referee must be sought.

Referees must have enough knowledge of the applicant's family and their parenting capacity to be able to provide information on the applicant's suitability to foster. They must be able to clarify issues and verify any facts provided by the applicant.

Referees should be informed that the reference is confidential under schedule 2 part 4 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and will not be shared with the applicant unless they consent to this; it is important that this is made clear to the referee in order to ensure they feel able to speak freely about the applicant's suitability, including any reservations that they may have.

2.8.1 Previous partners and adult children

Where information provided shows that the applicant has had a significant previous relationship (of at least 3 years duration), particularly where the couple raised children together, or where the applicant has adult children who live away from home, the social worker should make contact with the previous partner or adult child to obtain any relevant information.

As well as requesting verification of facts, the social worker should ask for any information on concerns regarding parenting ability or domestic abuse. The person should be informed that the information provided is confidential and will not be shared with the applicant unless they consent to this.

2.8.2 Information from schools

If the applicant has children of school age, the social worker may wish to contact the school to obtain information on the applicant's attitude to education and how they can support the education of a Looked After Child. The school may also be able to provide information on how fostering may impact on the family.

The assessing social worker must obtain consent from the applicant before approaching the school for any such information.

2.9 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 or senior should also write to the applicant to confirm the decision.

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.

3 Stage 2

3.1 Overview of Stage 2

Stage 2 involves carrying out an in-depth assessment of the applicant's suitability to foster looking specifically at their personal attributes, knowledge and experience in terms of child care and their potential ability to offer a high standard of care to looked after children.

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 this in-depth assessment, with all the information gathered and the recommendation of the assessing social worker, 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 CSSW Director as agency decision maker.

3.2 Formal assessment

All prospective foster carers must be assessed by a suitably qualified social worker with experience of fostering and family placements work and the assessment must cover the matters set out in Schedule 3 of the Fostering Regulations.

Camden uses BAAF Form F1 to record assessments of prospective foster carers (or F2 if the child is already known to the prospective foster carer). 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.

3.2.1 The Home Study

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 purpose of the assessment is to gather and collate all relevant information from the applicant, and to verify the information independently where possible. The assessment should also explore any issues or concerns that were identified during the preparation group training.

Before starting the home study, the assessing social worker should ensure that the applicant fully understands all the information on fostering that they have received during the preparation group training.

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.

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.

In addition to this birth children living outside the home and stepchildren will be interviewed as part of the assessment. Extended family members who are involved with the family household or frequent visitors may also be spoken to.

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.

3.2.2 Life history

The assessing social worker should try to obtain as much information about the applicant's life history, including details of education and employment, significant events and experiences of parenting and being parented.

In particular, the assessing social worker should be aware of any personal issues in the applicant's life that may have a direct bearing on their attitudes and ability to caring for vulnerable Looked After Children, or any attempts to cover up "gaps" in their personal history.

3.2.3 The training, support and development standards

A key part of the assessment is that applicants are able to demonstrate that they are able to meet a high standard under each element of the seven standards for fostering. This evidence may be taken from their personal experiences of parenting or being parented, as well as information they have obtained from initial training.

- Standard 1: understand the principles and values essential for fostering children and young people, providing a safe and caring environment;
- Standard 2: understand your role as a foster carer;
- Standard 3: understand health and safety and healthy care;
- Standard 4: know how to communicate effectively;
- Standard 5: understand the development of children and young people;
- Standard 6: safeguard children and young people (keep them safe from harm);
- Standard 7: develop yourself.

3.2.4 Areas for discussion

The following areas should be looked at in depth during the assessment to explore and evaluate the applicant's knowledge and experience in terms of the fostering task, as well as areas needing extra training and support:

- child rearing
- caring for children born to somebody else
- contact between fostered children and families
- helping children make sense of their past
- sexual boundaries and attitudes
- awareness of issues around child abuse, how to keep children safe and how to help them get help when they need it
- approaches to discipline
- awareness of how to promote secure attachments between children and appropriate adults
- awareness of own motivation for fostering/own needs to be met through the fostering process
- religion
- racial, cultural and linguistic issues

- standard of living and lifestyle
- education
- health, including mental health
- own experience of parenting and being parented
- own experiences in relation to disability and/or attitudes to disability.

The applicant should be made aware of the standards of care Camden expects from carers and referred to relevant Camden policies on:

- Valuing diversity
- Managing difficult behaviour
- Bullying
- Safe caring
- Children missing from placements
- Complaints and allegations against carers
- Child protection procedures
- Looked After Children procedures.

3.3 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.

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 senior practitioner and the Fostering manager.

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.

4 Assessment practice guidance

4.1 Assessment of family and friends foster carers

The Fostering Service may be asked to assess a member of a looked after child's family or friends network as a potential foster carer. The key differences with this assessment are:

- The carer is likely to have an established relationship with the child and the birth family.
- They may already be looking after the child under Regulation 24.
- The carer is being assessed to look after that particular child rather than any child.
- The carer may not have actively chosen to care for the child, but is doing so out of a sense of loyalty to the family.

Although the framework of the assessment will be the same as for all other carers, it is essential that assessing social workers understand the fundamental differences of the carer's unique position.

Although assessing social workers will follow most of this policy in assessing the carer, they must also refer to section 4 of the division's family and friends assessment guidance for further details on the assessment of this group.

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4.2 Re-assessment of foster carers

4.2.1 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 LAC.

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, Adoption 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:

4.2.2 Divorce or separation of joint carers

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.

4.2.3 Returning to fostering after a break

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 LAC.

4.2.4 Safeguarding or care standards concerns

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 LAC 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.

4.2.5 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 2 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.

Appendix 1

**Information to be obtained as part of Stage 1 enquiries
(Part 1 Schedule 2 of the Fostering Regulations 2011)**

- The applicant's full name, address and date of birth;
- Detail of the applicant's health, supported by a medical report;
- Particulars of other adult household members;
- Particulars of children in the applicant's family (whether or not they are members of the household) and any other children in the household;
- Particulars of the household's accommodation;
- The outcome of any request or application made by the applicant or any member of the applicant's household, to foster or adopt children or for registration as an early or later years provider under Part 3 of the Childcare Act 2006, including particulars of any previous approval or refusal of approval;
- The name and address of any fostering service that the applicant has been an approved foster carer for in the preceding 12 months;
- Names and addresses of two persons who will provide personal references for the applicant;
- In relation to the applicant and each member of their household aged 18 or over, an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate;
- Details of any current and any previous marriage, civil partnership or similar relationship.

Appendix 2

Assessment of foster carer's new partner

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

Appendix 3 Health and Safety Checklist

For official use only Def

Name of applicant/s **Home telephone no**

Home address

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)

General condition for assessment

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.



- 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**

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 fitted 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	

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	Yes / No
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

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.

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

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



* British Standard Approved kite mark



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

Appendix 4

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.

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 5: Fostering assessment flowchart

Stage 1

