

Viability Assessment

In the event that there are concerns about a child/young person and the parenting or care they are receiving; the Local Authority will look for alternative carers within the wider family/friend network that could care for and meet the needs of the child/young person. It is important that there is a plan in place for the child/young person in the event that they are unable to remain or return to the care of their mother and/or father.

If you are identified as an 'alternative carer' it is important for you to know that an assessment will be required to consider your ability to care for the child/young person and that the Local Authority would be **considering your capacity to provide 'permanence' to the child/young person until they are 18 years old.**

If you are identified as an 'alternative carer' the Local Authority will undertake a **VIABILITY ASSESSMENT** which will involve the following:

- 2-3 assessment sessions with a Social Worker and each session will take approximately 2-3 hours (please note further sessions may be required in order to ensure a thorough assessment is completed). [The initial session is completed jointly by the child's social worker and the assessing social worker;](#)
- The assessment will take approximately 3-4 hours for completion;
- If you are part of a couple, whether you live together or not, you will both be required to engage in the assessment and make yourself available for the appointment sessions;
- The sessions will take place within working hours of 9am – 5pm;
- Police and Local Authority checks of the person/people being assessed as well as any other adults living in the household or regular visitors to the home and you will need to provide consent to these checks;
- In some circumstances, checks may also be required with other professionals that you may be working with or who are involved in working with your family such as GP, school staff, probation, mental health services etc.
- In this assessment the following areas will be covered:
 - o Your knowledge and understanding of the concerns held by the Local Authority;
 - o Outcomes of checks of yourself and your household/family;
 - o Your health and the impact of this on your potential care of the child/young person;
 - o Your family history and relationships;
 - o Your employment, income, expenses and how you plan to care for the child/young person;
 - o The child/young person's specific needs and how you can/will plan to meet these needs;
 - o Social Worker analysis and recommendations.

Please note that **the viability assessment is likely to feel very intrusive** as a lot of information is required from you. This assessment requires you to be open and honest to ensure that a thorough assessment can be completed in respect of your ability to care for his child/young person throughout their childhood and into adulthood. However, this assessment is just a **brief assessment** in order to consider your capacity and whether you are 'viable' for further assessment.

In the event, that your viability assessment is positive the Local Authority will require further assessment of you to ensure that permanency can be secured for the child/young person through a legal order. **In most cases, if your viability assessment is positive the Local Authority will then progress to a Special Guardianship assessment.** Please see below for information in respect of a Special Guardianship Assessment. Your assessing social worker will also discuss this with you further.

[Consent for filing at court](#) - Once your assessment is completed, the assessing social worker will send this to you in order for you to review and ensure that the information you have provided is factually correct. You will be asked to provide consent in order for your assessment to be shared within the court arena. By giving this consent, you need to be aware that anyone who is party to proceedings including where relevant: the mother and her representative, the father and his representative, the court appointed Guardian and their representative (and another person who is made party to proceedings). If you wish to contest the outcome of your assessment, and seek for the child/ren to be placed with you and/or be assessed further, your assessment must be filed at court for you to be considered further. The Court/Judge cannot consider you if they do not see your viability assessment.

[It is important for you to be aware that, at times, the Judge in the court proceedings can direct the Local Authority to share your assessment even if you do not give consent.](#)

Special Guardianship Assessment

As stated above, if your viability assessment is positive the Local Authority may recommend a Special Guardianship assessment as a permanence option for the child/young person, in the event that they cannot remain or return to the care of their mother and/or father.

A **SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ASSESSMENT** will involve the following:

- 6-8 assessment sessions with a Social Worker and each session will take approximately 2-3 hours (please note further sessions may be required in order to ensure a thorough assessment is completed);
- If you are part of a couple, whether you live together or not, you will both be required to engage in the assessment and make yourself available for the appointment sessions. There may also be one or two sessions that are done with each person in the couple separately;
- The sessions will take place within working hours of 9am – 5pm;
- The assessment will take approximately 12-16 weeks for completion;
- You will be asked to engage in regular supervised contact sessions with the child/young person and the assessor would observe at least 1-2 of these sessions.
- If the child/young person is living with you, the assessor is likely to observe your interactions on at least 1-2 occasions and also seek feedback from the allocated social worker and professionals working with the child/young person;
- A DBS (Police) check is required of the person/people being assessed as well as any other adults living in the household or regular visitors to the home;
- You will be required to organise and engage in a medical assessment with your GP that will be shared with the Local Authority Agency Medical for consideration to be given to whether there are any health difficulties that would impact on your care of a child/young person;
- The following additional checks are required:
 - o [Local Authority checks – including with Local Authorities where you have previously resided;](#)
 - o Employment checks;
 - o Written and Interview References from friends/family;
 - o Ex-partner references;
 - o School and Education checks of any children;
 - o Ofsted check;
 - o Social Media checks;
 - o Mental Health Services; and
 - o Probation.
- In some circumstances, checks may also be required with other specialist or professionals that you may be working with or who are involved in working with your family.
- In this assessment the following areas will be covered:
 - o Nationality (*and immigration status where appropriate*);
 - o Racial origin and cultural and linguistic background;
 - o Your relationship status both past and present; and the nature of these relationships;
 - o Your relationship with the child/young person past and present;
 - o Your health history;
 - o How you relate to adults and children;
 - o Your previous experience of caring for children;
 - o Your understanding of, and ability to meet the child's current and likely future needs, particularly, any needs the child may have arising from harm that the child has suffered;
 - o Your understanding of, and ability to protect the child from any current or future risk of harm posed by the child's parents, relatives or any other person the local authority consider relevant, particularly in relation to contact between any such person and the child;

- Your ability and suitability to bring up the child until the child reaches the age of eighteen;
- Your income and expenditure;
- Your home and the neighbourhood;
- Information about other members of your household as well as your children, even if they are not living with you (or are now adults) and their views on the special guardianship;
- Your parents and siblings;
- Your religious persuasion, educational history, employment history; and personality and interests;
- Your willingness/ability to follow any wishes of the child or his/her parents in respect of the child's religious and cultural upbringing
- The child/young person's current and future relationship with the family of the prospective special guardian
- The reasons you wish to apply for this order;
- Your hopes and expectations for the child's future; and
- Your wishes and feelings in relation to contact between the child and his/her relatives or any other person the local authority consider relevant

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REGULATION 24 ASSESSMENT AND PANEL

If a child/ren is already living with you or is placed with you and **becomes a Looked After Child to the Local Authority**, you will be committing to be a Kinship Foster Carer whilst court proceedings are completed and the long-term permanency plan is determined for the child/ren you are caring for.

This process will involve the following:

- A written agreement between yourself and the Local Authority in respect of the expectations and requirements of you and on you whilst you are a kinship foster carer in respect of your care and protection of the child/ren;
- Your engagement with a Supervising Social Worker (who also completes your assessment);
- The above SGO assessment process requirements being completed;
- Your attendance at the Fostering and Permanence Panel within 16 weeks for approval as a kinship foster carer. Possible attendance at a 2nd Fostering and Permanence Panel after an additional 8 weeks if you have not been approved at the initial panel.
- The following additional checks are required:
 - Health and Safety checklist;
 - Home Safer Caring;
 - Pet questionnaire (where applicable)