



Form F (Prospective Foster Carer Assessment) frequently asked questions and answers

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Books and training

Q. Will you be doing more in-depth training on the Form F changes for experienced social workers?

Email the training team for all requests for bespoke training and commissioned courses at training.baaf@coram.org.uk.

Look on our training pages on the [website](#) for courses on the open programme. Our training is being updated to reflect the changes to the form.

Q. When will the recording be made available?

The open access recording of the Form F briefing is available on the [website](#).

Q. Is there revised guidance for the new Form F?

The updated guidance sits alongside the form and the assessing social worker must have access to the guidance otherwise they cannot carry out the assessment.

Q. Are you doing Form F training? I would really like to know if you are doing any longer and more in-depth training on the new Form F. Not for new social workers but for experienced social workers.

We have a [two-day training course](#) for completing Form F prospective foster carer assessments.



Q. Has the training for panel members been updated yet?

We will be updating the CoramBAAF panel training / courses to reflect the revised Form F as well as other form developments for example Form K.

Q. When will the updated *Undertaking a Fostering Assessment* book be published? As an independent panel member where can I buy the book?

The Undertaking a Fostering Assessment book is currently being revised. Once published the book can be purchased via the CoramBAAF bookshop.

Main changes, timescales and using the new form

Q. When should we begin to use the new Form F documents? Is it compulsory for all agencies (LAs & IFAs) to use the new Form F? Is there a timescale for using the forms as our service has embedded them into our system? When will the templates be made available?

The revised form F should be used immediately. If you are part way through an assessment for applicants with the 2018 version of the Form F continue using that one. Some fostering services will need a short period of time to upload the new Form F and associated guidance to their IT systems to make them available to all relevant staff, this should be done as soon as this is possible.

Q. We find that Panel like some sort of introduction/pen picture/summary type of section. Is this still there?

Individual agencies have discretion on whether to include this. See the guidance notes that accompany the revised Form F, after the cover sheet: “Many fostering services like to include a one-page pen picture description of the applicant/s and their household, sometimes including a photo. This contains a few facts about the family and the household. The pen picture is not included in this template, but services can insert their own here if desired.”

Q. Is there an additional section for parent and child assessment?

Those with a licence to use Form F have – have access to additional forms and the Parent and child assessment report is one of these.

Additionally the [*parent and child fostering*](#) Good Practice Guide is available to buy from CoramBAAF’s Bookshop. The appendices in this publication include a set of additional forms that are designed to be used in this area of practice.

Q. A lot of it appears to be aimed at prospective carers answering the questions and the assessing social worker analysing. This is a shift to how we currently write; should it be the carers taking the responsibility for this? In terms of Section B, are we asking that



prospective carers write this in first person? Is Section B1 written in the first person and the analysis in the third person?

The questions have been written to encourage collaborative working and openness; the responsibility remains with the assessing social worker to complete the whole report. If the assessing social worker chooses to include verbatim quotes/responses from applicants, these can be included but must be acknowledged as the words of the applicant and then analysed by the assessing social worker. Some assessing social workers will choose to write the report in the first person, others feel more comfortable with the third person. The report is not written by the applicants.

Q. Do we miss the full picture of an applicant's early years (0-18) and adulthood? That information produces a great timeline, and who's who in a person's life, in the form of a journey. Is it still okay for applicants to write about their childhood or is that now discouraged?

It is advisable to complete a chronology / timeline with applicants which can be included in the paperwork for panel. In the new Form F see also Section B: Part One question 6) Family history and childhood – describe your background, current family relationships and dynamics. (Refer to the applicant's completed genogram.)

It is not necessary to write in detail or at length about the experiences of the applicant's childhood unless it is particularly relevant to the role of being a foster carer.

Q. Is there clarity on what is stage one and stage two? In my experience this is varied in some agencies, often around all background checks being needed etc. Would the stage 1 and stage 2 process apply for the new form?

The regulations have not changed, clarity about what is required at stage one and stage two of a fostering assessment is set out in the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (Reg 26 and schedule 3) and related statutory guidance ['Assessment and approval of foster carers'](#). Assessors should be familiar with the requirements. Fostering services are permitted to undertake stage one and two concurrently. While Form F Section A and Form F Section B relate to the two stages of assessment, they do not precisely align. Many fostering agencies run stage one and stage two concurrently.

Q. Analysis is important but there seems to be duplication in having analysis after each section AND overall analysis. Why?

Analysis is crucial. Each section requires analysis from the assessing social worker and the overall analysis should briefly highlight key strengths and vulnerabilities.

Q. Regarding the previous local authority (LA) checks, the notes stated to undertake the LA checks where applicants have raised children. Does this have a time restriction, or do we need to undertake LA checks for all the areas where the applicants have raised children? Do we need to undertake LA checks if the applicants have raised children going



back more than 10 years? Does that relate to a child now in the foster carer's household or does it include any birth children the applicants had, even if they are adults now? Do we need to do a LA check on where they lived from the birth of the child?

Checks must be carried out with the local authority where the applicant is currently living. We recommend that checks are also undertaken with any previous local authority where an applicant has lived going back at least 10 years, and also with any previous local authority where the applicant has raised children (0-18 years). Arguably these checks should be undertaken for all local authorities where applicants have previously lived – see [Undertaking checks and references in fostering and adoption assessments](#) for further information.

Q. At the end of Section A Part one it asks for date when all stage 1 information was received. Does this mean that information gathered in Section A part two is not stage 1 information?

Regulations and statutory guidance set out what is required at stage one and stage two of a fostering assessment. The importance of the date when the final piece of statutory stage one information is received, as required by the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 Reg 26(1A) and schedule 3, is that this starts the clock ticking on the timescale to cease at stage one if the prospective foster carer is unsuitable based on stage one information. The fostering decision maker's decision must be made and conveyed in writing to the prospective foster carer within 10 days of the final piece of stage one information being received, otherwise the assessment must continue at stage two and cannot end without a report to panel.

The Statutory Guidance Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers sets out stage one briefly as follows:

- Obtain the information specified in Part 1 of Schedule 3:
- The applicant's full name, address and date of birth;
- details 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.
- consult the local authority in whose area the applicant lives, if this is different to the fostering service; and
- interview at least two personal referees and prepare written reports of the interviews; or, if the person has been an approved foster carer for another fostering service in the preceding twelve months, request a written reference from that fostering service.

Q. All fostering agencies want their foster carers to look after children in a therapeutic way, yet until now the Form F has not specifically addressed the applicant's capacity or potential to care in this way. Does the new Form F address this at all? One of the things that foster panel sometimes struggles with is understanding how the prospective FCs would manage when children display distressed behaviours, either now or as they get older, and if they understand the underlying messages of distressed behaviours.

The new section covering 'What does the child need?' prioritises the applicant's abilities and capacity to parent therapeutically.

Q. Does the part of Section A covering children in the household include space for any deceased children the applicants might have had?

Circumstances about any deceased children must be included within the report.

Q. I am an independent fostering panel member. In my view any information in the assessment that does not inform my decision to approve or reject the applicants is excessive. So, how does the knowledge of the applicants' sexual inclinations or self-assigned gender either prevent or encourage approval?

Panel members make a recommendation regarding the suitability of a prospective foster carer/s whether they should be approved or not. To inform this recommendation panel members are presented with a wide range of information, evidence and analysis collated within the report. Information about family relationships dynamics, partnerships, sexual orientation, gender and other protected characteristics can inform panel about significant life experiences of an applicant. Major or significant life experiences, whatever they may be, can impact a person, their personal sense of identity and outlook on the world and it is important that Panel are aware of this. This information is crucial because without it fostering agencies cannot strive for inclusivity, equity and celebration of diversity and difference. Discrimination is experienced by many prospective and approved foster carers in various forms, ignoring someone's unique diversity and characteristics is a form of discrimination. Respectful professional curiosity should always be adhered to during the assessment and panel processes.

Q. What are the recommended timescales for completing the form? What is the expected timeframe to complete a full assessment? Has this changed from 12 weeks?



Recommended timescales have not changed with the revision - we advise assessments take on average six months. Some agencies aim to complete assessments in a shorter time, however, we do not recommend trying to rush the process or making shortcuts, because it is essential that the applicant has time to consider if fostering will be right for them and that the assessing social worker has had time to fully assess the applicant, which is critical for safeguarding.

National Minimum Standard 14.4 says that “The fostering panel makes its recommendation on the suitability of a prospective foster carer within eight months of receipt of the prospective foster carer’s application to be assessed.”

Q. There is a lot more to be done in this assessment, how long is it expected to take to complete?

We are aware that using a revised assessment process takes time to embed in practice. The average time to complete an assessment is four to six months.

Q. Are there sections to capture the voice and understanding of the applicants’ own children?

In Section B in the ‘What does the child need?’ section there are opportunities for the applicant/s to reflect on how they think their own children will respond to becoming a fostering family. This should include how they envisage they will support / play with the children, any worries they have and potential challenges.

The following areas in the form can also be used to include the voice of the applicants’ own children:

Section B – Part One

1) Tell us about your motivations and reasons for applying now. What do you imagine the impact of fostering would be on your family? If you are a parent, tell us about that.

5) Tell us about everyone living in your home, including those who live there intermittently, e.g. at university or working away from home.

9) Tell us about members of your family not living in your home, including children living elsewhere.

Q. I wondered from the short briefing if there would have been more exploration of independent life skills for children and young people - financial skills, learning to travel, use equipment and learning to cook etc. I guess it could be squeezed into some areas.

Within the new ‘What does the child need?’ section there are ample opportunities to explore independent life skills with applicants.



Q. I haven't seen the whole form yet but was wondering whether there is a statement or question within it in relation to the feelings of foster carers and their views on having a relationship with birth families? Working with birth families and how this fits in the new form?

This element of fostering is explored in the 'What does the child need?' section.

Are applicants no longer encouraged to write a piece about their life history? This is a piece of homework I always get my applicants to complete, then I submit it to panel with all the other paperwork.

This is not a requirement within the revised Form F however, individual fostering agencies may choose to ask applicants to do this. In the new Form F see Section B: Part One question 6) Family history and childhood – describe your background, current family relationships and dynamics. (Refer to the applicant's completed genogram.)

Q. Do you suggest applicants do the 'Prepare to foster' course first before starting the CoramBAAF Form F assessment?

The Fostering Network (TFN) have recently revised their Skills to Foster preparatory training (there are other preparatory fostering training courses available) in line with the revisions to Form F. TFN advise that applicants complete the preparatory training prior to their assessment starting where this is feasible.

Q. How much background information vs. analysis should be included?

This will vary according to the applicant/s and the assessing social worker - both are important. Having said this, the background information needs to add context and key elements as opposed to lengthy narrative.

Q. Can you give some indication of how long (completed number of pages) a new Form F should be?

This is not possible to determine because it depends on too many variables including complexity of issues arising in assessments. Different fostering services will have their own expectations, and social workers' individual writing styles also vary.

Q. How do we get applicants to sign the form if the forms are integrated into the IT system?

Applicants' signatures can be scanned and added. Also there are very few situations where a typed signature is not considered acceptable, and nothing in fostering legislation that would prevent them being accepted.

If something is electronically signed (with a scanned or typed signature) and sent from that person's email address, or uploaded personally by them to a system that records the date,



then there is a record, that means it cannot subsequently be suggested that they did not 'sign'. If managed by email, a reply email confirming receipt would provide an additional record. Having a date/time record is the key issue that must be achieved by whatever process adopted. If you are dealing with signatures by email and applicants who are couples, you would need to ensure both are copied into emails as one cannot 'sign' for the other, electronically or otherwise.

Q. Can AI be used?

Personal AI accounts should not be used for workplace purposes. Local authorities and independent fostering agencies need to develop their policies and guidance for staff on the use of AI tools and programmes. Individual staff should ensure their use of AI is 'authorised' or permitted, if necessary by confirming with relevant lines of management, data governance, IT departments etc. to ensure relevant policies and requirements are complied with.

Q. The running order of Section B seems counter intuitive, with the applicant's historical information coming later in the report when it is often this information that informs their motivation to foster. How was this decision arrived at and how do assessors manage this when writing up the assessment?

The working group and the 12 pilot fostering agencies informed the wording and order of the questions in the form. Assessing social workers can choose to ask questions in the order that best fits the applicants they are working with.

Section B, Part 2: The child's needs

Q. Do we go through all 36 scenarios of 'What does a child need?' with the applicant? Have you considered that the new format could deter applicants at a point when we are seeing a national shortage of foster carers? Thirty-six questions in one section is a lot to go through with all the other questions in Form F.

Yes, the assessing social worker can plan how to cover the four sections, for example one per visit. It might be the case that several themes are covered in one discussion with applicants and this information can be used across all the relevant sections rather than repeating a statement if it has been explored and understood. The new section is informed by the '[10,000 Voices: The views of children in care on their well-being report](#)' (Coram Voice) where children in care have told the sector what they need from their foster carers. The role is complex and demanding. The assessment provides opportunities to be transparent with applicants regarding the breadth of the task.

Q. Should we be writing to the child as if we are the carers in the child section or as the assessor in a third-party way, i.e., 'I feel you will...'? Do we write in the third person as the assessor or from the child's perspective, or FC's perspective?



Some assessing social workers will choose to write the report in the first person, others feel more comfortable with the third person. Feedback from the pilot fostering agencies and the fostering panels was that both third person and first person report writing approaches worked.

The report is not written by the applicants.

Q. The previous Form F had a descriptive section before the analysis so I am just wondering about the section with the 36 questions from the child's perspective. How you would expect this to be written up? Will all 36 questions be answered in the analysis? Section B - part two only has space for analysis now. Is it the aim to purely offer an analysis of the conversations around the topic? In Section B (part 2) there was only an analysis box - does this mean that assessors gather the information exploring the statements with applicants and only analyse the information gathered as opposed to report the evidence? Can I confirm that you only write in the analysis sections, rather than under each question for the new Section B part 2? Does each question have to be answered alongside the question, or summarised by the assessor? For the new Section B part 2, do you only write in the analysis box, or do you write under each question?

What makes good analysis? Definitions

It is essential to understand the difference between narrative description and analysis.

Assessment: collecting, analysing and recording information about people, their circumstances, and the context of their lives in order to reach an understanding of their situation and to inform decisions.

Risk assessment: weighing up potential benefits as well as potential harms or losses. Taking risks involves deciding if the potential benefits of a proposed act outweigh the potential drawbacks.

Analysis: the examination of an issue, problem, topic or situation that goes beyond describing it and includes (one or more of) theories, thoughts, opinions and judgements.

(Oxford Dictionary of Social Work and Social Care, 2018)

Purpose of analysis in Form F

The purpose of the social work analysis in Form F is to provide a clear, concise interpretation of the prospective foster carer's situation based on facts and information gathered, with a specific focus on what each detail means for their capacity to care for a child. The analysis is not a repetition of facts but an explanation of how those facts affect their capacity, motivation, strengths and vulnerabilities and what this will mean for a child in their care. Your goal is to help panels and agency decision-makers understand the reasoning for your recommendation about their ability to provide safe and emotionally attuned care.



Key features of good analysis

Child focused: Ensure that the child is central to your thinking throughout, even when you are describing the behaviour of adults. Think about what the information might mean for the child's experience. The purpose of the analysis is to interpret information about how an adult can meet a child's needs.

Authority: Be confident and authoritative in your analysis, owning your professional opinion.

Clarity: Use straightforward language that everyone can understand. Avoid jargon or language that may have different meanings to different readers. Avoid overly long sentences and unnecessarily formal language.

Focus: Be specific about the behaviours, qualities and attitudes you are describing.

Balance: Be honest about both strengths and vulnerabilities and discuss both robustly and equally. Be clear about potential vulnerabilities and how these can be supported or mitigated against, both now and in the future.

Integrity: Acknowledge what you do not know, identify what you still need to know, and weigh up the significance of any gaps in knowledge.

Be concise and avoid repetition: Be careful not to duplicate information already contained elsewhere in the report. Be concise, specific, succinct and relevant.

Distinguish fact and opinion: Be clear about whether the information is fact or opinion, and whose opinion you are stating.

Acknowledge differences of opinion: Be clear if there are differing views and explain the relevance and significance.

Explore differences: Articulate the ethnic, cultural, faith and sexual orientation context and the significance of this for your analysis. Reflect on your own perceptions, values and attitudes and how these influence your assessment, thinking and decision-making.

Show your workings out: Be clear about your thinking process, and how you have used the available information to reach a conclusion. If an opinion or view has changed, it could be helpful for the reader to understand how and why this happened.

Triangulate facts/views/observations: Check if facts and perspectives are consistent and congruent. Evaluate significance, weight and reliability of information.

Sources of information: State sources and types of references, observations, opinion and information.



There are specific analysis sections throughout Section B and a final analysis section at the end of Section B. Analysis requires the assessing social worker to draw conclusions and views based on the information gathered within each area being discussed and understood. The role of the assessing social worker is to consider what all this information, evidence and recordings from observations means for children and these people as foster carers in the future.

Q. How would you introduce the 36 statements to the applicant? More information is needed on the use of the statements and the case studies.

What does the child need?

This section provides an opportunity for applicants to think deeply about the extensive needs of a child and the responsibilities of foster carers to support and nurture them. Discussions during this part of the assessment will be predominantly child focused; however, in order for an applicant to make sense of what they are considering, it might be helpful to firstly think about themselves, particularly when considering identity. The assessor will have developed an understanding of the applicant's identity, but these discussions can allow for further exploration.

The guidance for this part of the assessment includes suggested questions, themes for discussion and examples of resources that will work alongside some of the statements in the 'What does the child need?' sections. The questions and resources are offered as a guide and not exhaustive. The assessing social worker can use the example supplementary questions or develop their own depending on the knowledge and experience of the applicant. The assessing social worker and fostering service will have tools, resources and effective methods embedded in practice that enhance the assessment of applicants - these should continue to be used.

The guidance provides one case study under each of the four statement categories: Identity and relationships; Advocacy and empowerment; Being part of a foster family; Strengthening and building resilience. These can be used by the assessing social worker to consider the types of experiences and possible needs of a child. We have included case studies as tools that can be used by assessing social workers to bring to life some of the issues and complexities being explored in this section. The case studies are designed to facilitate a discussion, allowing the applicant/s to respond to and explore the individual needs of the child. There are no set right answers here, so long as the assessing social worker is confident the applicant/s have shown sufficient consideration of a child in care's needs and demonstrated an ability and willingness to meet them.

The case studies are examples and do not have to be used. The assessing social worker can use their discretion to adapt or replace these with alternative case studies and to inform their analysis of the applicant/s capacity to care for a child, as well as where they may require additional training or support.

Q. Section B Part two - there are only boxes for the analysis not for information gathered or to record discussions had around the different topics. How do we record this



information as it is not an analysis? We are clear about the analysis part just not where to record the other information that isn't the analysis. I was confused about the section where only analysis is required and the questions are as if the child is speaking directly. Are we reading each statement to the applicant and saying how they would meet their need and writing that in analysis?

Assessing social workers should include information that they are told / have observed or understand from visits with applicants during the discussions about what a child will need from them. Not all details, examples, narratives need to be included however, some examples will be helpful for the panel members to gain an understanding of what it will be like as a child being cared for in this foster family. The assessing social worker will need to delineate which parts of the report describe what they heard / witnessed and which parts are for the analysis sections that respond and reflect on the findings. This applies throughout the whole assessment.

Additional documents and other forms

Q. Will there be any forms for assessing private fostering?

There are no plans for private fostering forms in the short-term but it is an area that CoramBAAF is considering.

Q. 2022 Financial document was not included in attachments sent?

No. However, the financial check form, last updated in 2022, is available, as part of our 'Checks and References Resources' set of 10 forms, that can be used in conjunction with Form F and these are available to all Form F licence holders. These can be downloaded in the membership forms area or the download pages with passwords.

Q. Is the 'fostering family protective care plan' replacing the safer caring policy? And could you clarify exactly what the child protective care plan is? And the allegation plan? Where would we record discussions around Safer Caring - for example discussions around risk of allegations with carers, reporting missing children - is it Section B? The Fostering Family Protective Care Plan, Child's Protective Care Plan, Foster Carer Plan in case of Allegation - are these for agencies to draft themselves?

Yes - The Fostering Network will be publishing the Fostering Family Protective Care Plan, Child's Protective Care Plan and the Foster Carer Plan in case of Allegation documents soon. They will be replacing the Safer Caring policy and associated documents. Fostering agencies are not expected to draft these documents themselves.

In terms of risks for the child this will be covered in discussions with applicants in the 'What does the child need?' section.

For example - Being part of a foster family



16. I need to feel safe in your home.

17. I need to be kept safe when you are caring for me, wherever we are.

Q. Are any of the 'supporting documents' changing - i.e. pet assessment, health and safety form etc?

CoramBAAF will be revising supporting documents that require updating in due course.

Is there a separate form for applicants transferring from one agency to another?

The practice supporting transferring foster carers is being reviewed. In the meantime Form F is equally applicable for existing foster carers who are applying to foster for a different fostering service provider. See the Statutory Guidance, Assessment and Approval of Foster Carers for guidance in relation to assessing transferring foster carers and those who have recently ceased to be approved.

Q. How do we use Form F use in kinship care and with special fostering?

Form K has replaced Form C - for further information see our website update titled. ['From Form C to Form K: the new standard for assessment'](#).

For special fostering e.g. Parent and Child fostering or Short Breaks fostering, use the current templates within your fostering agency.

Q. Has the initial home visit form been updated in line with the Form F 2025?

CoramBAAF does not produce this form these tend to be developed by individual fostering agencies.

Q. Do you think it would be appropriate to now update the annual review document to reflect some of the changes to the Form F?

CoramBAAF will be revising supporting documents that require updating in due course.

Q. Will there be a supporting documents checklist which clarifies the essential documents to be seen by panel members alongside the assessment form, as well as other supporting documents that can be verified by the organisation rather than sent to panel?

See the guidance document that contains the checklist. Fostering services and panels vary in how much 'additional' information they send to panel members, fostering agencies should continue to be mindful of not overloading panel members with unnecessary reading in advance of panel.

Q. Are the supporting documents also changing i.e. pet assessment form?

No not yet.

Q. Will the guidance on effective fostering panels be updated with the new Form F and K?

Yes, in due course.

Guidance, case studies and good practice examples

Q. Is there an exemplar of Form F?

No. We do not have a sample completed version of Form F. Form F will remain a standing agenda item at our practice forum for the next few months. Members may wish to share practice around anonymised assessments. We would encourage local authorities to start saving anonymised sample assessments to share good practice within their service.

Q. Is the new Form F longer or more streamlined than the old version? Do you have a recommended length you feel the Form F should be?

It is difficult to determine if the new form is longer. One of the principles for revising the Form F was to reduce repetition and the likelihood of duplicating information. Some sections were deleted but there is a new section which will take time to embed in practice. It is not possible to give an average length of a report because each report will be unique.

Q. DBS discloses an offence with guidance to seek legal advice. Is there any more information about this?

Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks: Adams (2017) addresses in detail the issues around undertaking and making judgements in relation to DBS checks, and assessors are expected to be familiar with this material. Each fostering service should have a policy for undertaking DBS checks and Adams (2017) offers advice on what this might cover. The assessing social worker needs to obtain legal advice if an offence against a person or a child is disclosed.

If the DBS discloses an offence that would prevent the applicant from fostering, the assessment may need to stop. Alternatively, risk assessments and a bespoke plan could enable the applicant to be approved under Reg 26(8). The assessing social worker is required to provide analysis of why the applicant should be recommended for approval. In these instances, the assessing social worker will need to access legal advice.

Regulation 26(8) allows the fostering service to consider the approval or continuing suitability of a foster carer for a particular child, even though they would have been debarred by regulation 26(5) or (7), if they or a member of their household are related to the child, or they are already acting as a foster carer for the child, providing the responsible authority is satisfied that the child's welfare requires it.



Q. Ethnic heritage - Is there any more information about this with examples?

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) sets out that ‘the terminology used to describe ethnic groups has changed markedly over time and however defined or measured, tends to evolve in the context of social and political attitudes or developments. Ethnic group is also very diverse, encompassing common ancestry and elements of culture, identity, religion, language and physical appearance.’ It recommends that people should be invited to select, from a list of categories, the ethnic group to which they consider they belong. These categories are also now used by Ofsted and so will be familiar to social workers (see guidance for list of ethnic groups).

It is recognised that these ethnic groups do not represent how all people identify. People are encouraged to write in their ethnic heritage using their own words if they do not identify with any groups in the list.

Both ethnicity and ethnic heritage are self-defined by the applicants.

Q. Identity - Religion – practising/non practising/ lived/official - Is there any more information about this with examples on lived religion?

Religion – practising or non-practising, lived or official

The religion or faith group for each applicant is recorded here; this is self-defined. Space is included for the applicant to describe in more detail what their religion or faith means to them in their life.

This section allows for the applicant to describe how their religion is important to the various elements of their life. Do they practice daily, weekly, monthly or on an ad hoc basis? Does this require attendance at a religious building or setting? Are they part of a religious community and will this community provide support if the applicant is approved?

The terms “lived religion” and “official religion” come from research conducted by Coventry University (Cheruvallil-Contractor et al, 2024) as a result of work done directly with care experienced children and young people around how they experienced religion, with identity at its core. This research is also relevant when thinking about adults’ religion and faith. The concept of lived religion allows an exploration of religion that maps the experiences and perceptions of an individual. Individuals experience religion through their social contexts and cultural practices, what they wear or eat, as well as through texts.

Q. Is there any change in best practice in terms of couples’ relationships alongside the updated Form F - for example a married couple that may spend significant time apart (making it hard for the second applicant to meet NMS and TSD standards?)

The structures of families and culture around what family life looks like in the UK is an evolving picture and fostering agencies are actively encouraged to think about how they can support families who are interested in becoming foster carers. This might require some



creative solutions to ensure that fostering regulations are adhered to whilst not being a barrier at the same time.

There needs to be clarity for assessors that it is expected that they gather the information and complete all sections of the report. As a panel chair, I can see where social workers take shortcuts and I'm keen not to lose the safeguarding oversight, as I feel other "therapeutic" fostering assessment forms do this when applicants complete it themselves.

Yes, the assessing social worker is expected to gather all information and complete all sections of the report - this is made explicit in the guidance. None of the form should be completed by applicants. Shortcuts would be viewed as poor practice and safeguarding remains the key thread that should be returned to throughout the whole assessment.

Q. Is there any advice around terms of approval? Local authorities want very specific approvals, whereas independent fostering agencies want more autonomy around placements and therefore less restrictive approvals.

Fostering agencies and their panels will have their own local policies and practices around approvals, however practice around approval must remain compliant with legislation.

When assessing a prospective foster carer, the assessor will also reach a conclusion about their terms of approval should they be approved. Terms of approval would reflect, for example, the number and age range of children they may be suitable to foster, whether short-term, long-term or for specialist schemes such as parent and child fostering etc. CoramBAAF advises that it is not acceptable to either ignore the regulatory requirement to consider terms of approval, or to routinely approve foster carers for the age range 0–18 without evidencing in each individual case how they will be able to meet the needs of children and across the whole age range. For further discussion see Practice Note 70, [‘The fostering decision maker England’](#) and our Briefing Note on [‘The usual fostering limit, exemptions and terms of approval England’](#).

Accessing the new forms and guidance

Q. There are some agencies working with very old Form F documents and they may not be licenced to use the new Form F. Is this something that, as an independent social worker, I need to challenge?

Yes. Only a current year dated forms licence encompasses all previous form versions issued usage. Licences are issued from 1 April to 31 March each year and then renewed. If not renewed forms usage permissions are suspended. CoramBAAF full IFP membership does include the usage of all forms. However, if an agency is a non CoramBAAF member and does not have a current year forms licence, one can be easily arranged/obtained by contacting CoramBAAF. Licences are always issued to encompass the latest form versions we have published.



If a fostering agency is not using the new Form F then independent social workers should check with the agency that they have a current licence, additionally by contacting the licencing team this information can be doublechecked. Licences@coram.org.uk

Q. When will we be able to start using the new form F in Wales? Unless you have an agreement with CoramBAAF and are piloting the new form F version, you will only be able to use the new Form F in Wales once it has been published by CoramBAAF and when it has been officially added to all licences.

Work has started in Wales to update the Form F.

Q. As an independent panel member, am I able to get a copy of the new guidance notes from you to support my considerations for the new Form F? As an independent panel member, can I get a copy of the guidance notes to further support accurate understanding and analysis of form F content?

The fostering agency you are a panel member for should give you a copy of the Form F guidance.

Q. It would be helpful to have a link on the website to access the forms. Can the new Form F and guidance notes be emailed to me? Where can independent Form F assessors access the new form and guidance?

Form F and the accompanying guidance are accessible for organisations and agencies who have a licence to use our forms which is why we do not have links for the documents on the website. Read our [frequently asked questions](#) for more information.

Q. I'm curious as to whether the revised Form F will be adopted in Northern Ireland?

The revised Form F is in the process of being adapted for Northern Ireland.

Q. Can the checklist in the guidance be made available as a word document?

Yes – we will look into creating this.

Q. Will the guidance be provided digitally or as hard copy (Or both ideally!)?

The guidance is in digital format and can be printed if this is helpful.

Q. Can we share the new Form F template and guidance notes with the external assessors we work with?

Yes – if they have been allocated applicant/s to assess for your fostering service. The forms licence agreement permits the resources to be shared within the service and with relevant staff and 'authorised third parties' which would include independent social workers



undertaking assessments for the fostering service. They should not be further distributed and should not be made available on public websites.