

Guidance Notes

Introduction

These notes provide guidance about completing the Prospective Foster Carer Report (Form F) England. They are complemented by Chapman's (2017) book on undertaking an assessment using Form F, and by Adams' (2017) detailed guidance about best practice in undertaking checks and references.

This form has been designed for use in England; similar forms are available for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The form is not designed with family and friends carers in mind since an alternative assessment form – CoramBAAF Form C (Connected Person Report) – has been developed for this purpose.

Form F and the accompanying guidance were substantially revised in 2014 and last updated in 2018; these guidance notes were updated in 2019 with additional notes for carers of unaccompanied migrant children (pages 37-39). The form will be kept under review and will be updated and revised as appropriate. Please send any comments about your experience of using this form to paul.adams@corambaaf.org.uk.

Structure of the form

- **Front sheet**

The front sheet provides very basic information about the prospective foster carer(s) and the fostering service. It includes the social work recommendation about approval as a foster carer, and contains a pen picture of the applicant(s).

- **Section A – Factual information**

Section A contains the primarily factual information about the applicant(s) and their household. Part 1 reflects the information that is required to be gathered under Stage 1 of the assessment process. Part 2 includes verification of documents and other checks and factual information; information that comes under Stage 2 of the assessment process.

- **Section B – Description and analysis**

Section B consists of more detailed description and analysis, and is set out in three sub-sections. The first is about the applicant(s), history, family and lifestyle; the second is an assessment of fostering capacity; and the third looks at the applicant(s) preparation for the fostering task.

- **Section C – Supporting information**

This section collates supporting information consisting of material that is legally required to be included (such as personal references) and other documents such as family trees, ecomaps, chronologies and checklists (depending on the policy of the fostering service).

- **Section D – Specialist reports**

Where relevant, the assessor may include additional reports relating to parent and child fostering, permanent fostering, or other specialist fostering schemes. Formats are provided for parent and child and permanent fostering reports.

- **Section E – Summary and recommendation**

Section E consists of the summary and recommendation of the assessing worker, signed by them and the responsible manager. It also includes the applicant(s) observations on the report.

- **Additional tools and resources**

There are two sets of tools and resources provided to help the assessor with collecting and presenting some of the information required for this report. These are listed below.

Additional tools and resources (Form F)	
1	Application form
2	Assessment agreement
3	Stage 1 decision form
4	Chronology
5	Preparation training record
6	Parent and child report
7	Permanent fostering report

8	Second opinion report
9	Panel member notes
10	Stage 2 decision form

Additional tools and resources (Checks and references)	
1	Consent to checks and references form
2	Personal reference form
3	Interview record and analysis form
4	Home safety checklist
5	Dog assessment form
6	Pet assessment form
7	Financial statement and checklist
8	Former partner check form
9	Employment and voluntary activity form
10	School and nursery reference form

Purpose of the assessment and use of Form F

In essence, an assessment using Form F is primarily about identifying whether an applicant or applicants are suitable to be approved as foster carers, to determine the kind of fostering for which they are suitable, and to consider any terms of approval. The form offers a structure for providing evidence about these matters to fostering panels and to fostering service decision-makers.

A subsidiary purpose is to capture the work that has been done with applicants to prepare them for the task of fostering and to identify the kinds of support that they might need. The report needs to convey the essence of the applicant(s) and their family.

In summary, the task of the assessor is to use Form F to identify families who can reasonably be thought to have the required qualities for fostering, ensure that they have thought through the implications of fostering, consider the kinds of fostering for which they are best suited, and to rule out those carers who are clearly unsuitable.

It is important to be very clear that Form F is not designed as a matching tool to be routinely shared with those who are commissioning placements. It was never

designed for this purpose although we know in practice that it is often used that way. The information contained within Form F may be very personal and not relevant in considering whether someone is a good match for a particular child. In some cases it will contain information about third parties, such as a foster carer stating that they were sexually abused by a particular person such as a relative. It would be wrong for that information to be shared with commissioners. Information about a person's previous gender may also be included in the form, and disclosing that information might be an offence under the Gender Recognition Act 2004. We therefore advise that fostering services do not share the Form F with commissioning services, and if they do, to be very careful in making sure all information that should not be shared, has been redacted. At the time of writing (June 2018) CoramBAAF are exploring whether it might be possible to develop a specific tool for matching purposes

Factors that make a good foster carer

In thinking about whether someone will be a suitable foster carer, we are really trying to find out whether they will be effective and competent in this role, by which we tend to mean that they can offer robust and settled placements to children and young people where they are happy and can make progress across a range of developmental measures.

This leads us to ask what qualities or circumstances mean that certain foster carers can offer such placements. This is not a straightforward question since we know that there are a number of factors in why placements "succeed" or "fail" and many of these are unrelated to characteristics of the foster carer (Sinclair *et al*, 2005). The age and behaviour of the child or young person is important, along with the impact of birth family contact and the child's experiences at school. In addition, there is evidence that much depends on the "fit" between child and placement, be that the chemistry between the carer and child, or relations with other children in the foster home. Placements made in a rush, with little consideration about matching, are also less likely to go well.

Luke and Sebba (2013) note that there is a 'lack of research linking the characteristics and competencies of new foster care applicants to later measures of success', but nevertheless, we can identify from research a number of key factors for foster carers that are associated with positive outcomes for the children and young people they look after (Quinton *et al*, 1998; Dozier *et al*, 2002; Farmer *et al*, 2004;

Dozier, 2005; Sinclair, 2005; Sinclair *et al*, 2005; Dozier and Lindheim, 2006; Dozier *et al*, 2009).

Most crucial is the issue of parenting capacity, described as follows:

- Ability to provide warmth, empathy and encouragement. Carers need to be able to demonstrate that they love or at least like the child, listen to them, encourage them, and make time to enjoy doing activities with them.
- Ability to set structure and boundaries with fairness and empathy. Carers need to be able to effectively manage often difficult and rejecting behaviour, and to set clear expectations and be firm in requiring compliance with them. Where they are fostering as a couple, it is necessary that there is a shared approach to matters of discipline.
- Ability to show durability, resilience, and commitment. This means that the carers have the emotional strength and endurance that will allow them to continue to foster a child for as long as he or she needs the placement, and to demonstrate commitment to them during that period.

Sinclair (2005, p. 80) uses the term 'authoritative parenting' to describe a style that combines clear boundaries and warmth, and suggests that this parenting style is more likely to achieve positive fostering outcomes than other styles. This means that 'Carers needed to be committed, persistent, caring, willing to spend time with the child and to listen and encourage, and to set limits where necessary' (Sinclair *et al*, 2005, p. 81).

Where foster carers demonstrate these qualities, they will be well placed to meet the needs of children as set out in the attachment theory literature. In relation to infants, this is well argued by Dozier (2005), Dozier and Lindhiem (2006), and Dozier *et al* (2002; 2009); and in relation to older children most helpfully considered by Schofield and Beek (2014) in *The Secure Base Model*.

The qualities in relation to setting boundaries will also be consistent with social learning theory approaches to fostering, such as multi-dimensional treatment foster care, and the importance of doing activities with children and young people is emphasised in the Secure Base Model (Schofield and Beek, 2014) and in resilience theory (Gilligan, 2009). The qualities identified above are also recognised in the

parenting capacity dimension of the *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families* (Department of Health, 2000) that covers basic care, ensuring safety, emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance and boundaries, and stability.

Evidence from children and young people offers further confirmation that these are the sorts of qualities they want in their foster carers (Sinclair, 2005). They want to be loved or liked in a way that is sensitive to their experiences and needs, and avoids conflicts of loyalty with birth families. They value encouragement and attention; being listened to; given time; and made to feel that they count for something. Children and young people want to be accepted as part of the family, to get on well with other family members, and to feel that they have a place in that family. If they need to be disciplined (and some do accept the needs for rules and consequences), then they want these to be fair and consistent. Young people want a sense that their carer is not just doing it for the money, that they will stick with them and fight for them come what may and, particularly if they are in long-term foster care, that this commitment will outlast their official period of being in care.

The factors identified above relate primarily to interacting with and forming relationships with a child and young person, but successful fostering requires more than this. We therefore need to consider some additional key qualities.

- Ability to work effectively with others. This entails working well with other members of the fostering team, social workers, birth parents, schools and others. It requires empathy and a careful handling of the impact of these people on the children, as well as promoting the child's relationship with them.

Systems theory makes clear that the success of a placement will often depend on how well the different parties can work together in the best interests of the child, and foster carers will play a crucial part in that. Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) reports from both England (2013) and Wales (2013) show that issues around working openly and honestly with professionals, and associated difficulties in establishing or maintaining effective communication, are amongst the most common reasons for applicants being deemed unsuitable, or foster carers being deemed no longer suitable to foster. This suggests that assessments need to rigorously consider

whether applicants will be able to work effectively with others, particularly in the stressful and challenging contexts that are inevitable with fostering.

- Understanding of identity and diversity. This entails having an approach that values difference in society, and demonstrates a willingness to learn about other cultures or issues as appropriate to the needs of individual children in their care. It is about accepting individual children for who they are, being non-judgemental, and being able to challenge discrimination where appropriate.

While having a sophisticated understanding of identity and diversity issues might not be essential to successful outcomes in every foster placement, this is a desirable quality, and fits with the requirements in fostering statutory guidance (paragraphs 3.43–3.48). There is substantial evidence to show that insensitivity and ignorance in relation to matters of identity can have significant adverse impact on individual children and young people. In an increasingly multicultural society, many foster carers will be required to look after children from different ethnic and religious backgrounds from their own, and many foster carers do this to good effect. However, it is important to recognise that diversity covers more than ethnicity and religion, and issues of gender, sexuality and disability all contribute to our diverse communities. Foster carers should be able to demonstrate a flexible, inclusive and open perspective if they are to effectively meet children's individual needs.

- Ability to make use of formal and/or informal support networks for practical and emotional support.

The stresses of fostering are well recognised, and fostering services are required to provide considerable structured support. Foster carers need to be able to make good use of this, but in practice will often feel more benefits from the support that comes from family and friends. Sinclair (2005, p. 84) notes that 'carers who received a lot of support from their own children (including adult children who lived at home or nearby) had fewer disruptions'.

While research does suggest that these factors are associated with effective foster care, it is important to consider these elements with caution. The evidence is imprecise and it is likely that what makes a good foster carer for a severely disabled infant might be quite different from that which makes a good foster carer for

challenging teenagers in a specialist treatment scheme. This guidance therefore needs to be applied carefully, sensitively and flexibly.

Undertaking the assessment

The usefulness of any form will depend crucially on the skill and competence of the person completing it. The reliability of the evidence provided by the referees and applicant(s) will vary, and judgements will have to be made that are complex and difficult. This is why assessors are expected to be suitably qualified, trained and supported for this task. (Form F is designed for use by registered social workers with experience of fostering or family placement work.)

One of the skills that a good assessor must demonstrate is the ability to get alongside and work effectively with the applicant(s) in a collaborative manner. This will mean listening to and understanding the applicant(s), and playing an active role in helping them to reflect on what fostering might mean in their particular context. It will also mean engaging in a discussion of their strengths, what might prove challenging, and what support they might need to foster effectively. It might also mean helping some applicant(s) to see that fostering is not for them, or that the time for them to foster is not right.

In presenting the assessment report, it is essential that the views of the applicant(s) are evident. The reader must be able to see the applicant(s) reasons for wanting to foster, the kind of child they think would suit their family, the way they see their family life developing, the type of fostering they want to do, and the strengths they think they would bring to this. In providing this and other information, the assessor might invite the applicant(s) to provide their own written testimony, or might prefer to ensure that this is evident in the body of the report.

The assessment report is a social work report, and while a collaborative approach is essential, it is the assessing social worker who needs to take the responsibility for the report. They will need to provide an analytical account of how they reached their conclusions and to justify their recommendation regarding suitability or otherwise. This approach should be evident throughout the report.

It is essential that the assessor take full account of the identity and diversity of applicants. Fostering services have increasingly recognised the contribution that adults from all backgrounds can make to the lives of children in care. Single

applicants and married, cohabiting couples, civil partners, gay, lesbian and heterosexual applicants and applicants from a diverse range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds as well as disabled applicants have all proved to be excellent foster carers. The assessment must take place in a context that recognises discrimination, values diversity, and focuses on the needs of children in care.

Within the tools and resources section of this form there is an Assessment Agreement document that may be helpful to plan the fostering assessment.

Evidence and analysis

Although Form F does not use a competency structure, it does aim to cover all those competencies that are important to being an effective foster carer. In providing evidence in the report, it is essential that assessing social workers understand the principles of a competency approach as set out in BAAF Practice Note 40:

Undertaking Competence Assessments (2000). This Practice Note defines competence as a concept combining values, skills and knowledge in a 'directly observable and measurable way'. Evidence can take a number of forms, such as direct observation, direct questions, references and testimonials of others, specific written tasks or focused discussions, or case studies.

It is for the assessor to decide how best to gather information, but the report should provide evidence of a range of approaches, and should not overly rely on self-reporting from the applicant(s). Direct observation is particularly important, and there are strong arguments to suggest that the assessor should always observe the foster carer interacting with a child of a similar age to that proposed for fostering. The importance of references and testimonials is discussed below, and this can usefully include testimonials from children in the applicant(s) own network.

It is expected that analysis is provided throughout the whole report, and while this is specifically required at the end of each sub-section in Section B, should be equally evident in other parts of the report. Description alone is not enough; the assessor is expected to make sense of the information that is provided, and consider how it is relevant to the fostering task. In analysing the evidence, the assessor should be considering whether the emerging picture is a consistent one, and be asking questions if this is not the case. The report should identify both strengths, areas of

concern, and potential limitations. The assessor should cross-reference where appropriate, and avoid repetition.

References and resources

Adams P (2017) *Undertaking Checks and References in Fostering and Adoption Assessments*, London: CoramBAAF

Adams P (2015) *Dogs and Pets in Fostering and Adoption*, London: BAAF

Adams P and Dibben E (2011) *Parent and Child Fostering*, London: BAAF

BAAF/CoramBAAF Practice Notes:

Note 40: *Undertaking Competence Assessments*

Note 55: *Using the Internet in Fostering and Adoption Assessments*

Note 60: *Undertaking Overseas Checks in Fostering and Adoption Assessments*

Note 61: *Home Safety Checks in Fostering and Adoption*

Note 68: *Reducing the Risks of Environmental Tobacco Smoke for Looked After Children and their Carers*

Note 69: *Assessing and Supporting Transgender Applicants to Foster and Adopt*

Beesley P (2015) *Making Good Assessments*, London: CoramBAAF

Betts B (2007) *A Marginalised Resource? Recruiting, assessing and supporting single carers*, London: BAAF

Chapman R (2017) *Undertaking a Fostering Assessment: A guide to collecting and analysing information for Form F (Fostering) England*, London: CoramBAAF

Dando I and Minty B (1987) 'What makes good foster parents?', *British Journal of Social Work*, 17, pp. 383–400

De Jong A and Donnelly S (2015) *Recruiting, Assessing and Supporting Lesbian and Gay Adopters*, London: BAAF

Delfabbro P, Taplin J and Bentham Y (2002) 'Is it worthwhile? Motivational factors and perceived difficulties for caring in South Australia', *Adoption & Fostering*, 26:2, pp. 28–37

Department of Health (2000) *Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families*, London: DH

Dozier M (2005) 'Challenges of foster care', *Attachment and Human Development*, 7:1, pp. 27–30

Dozier M, Higley E, Albus K and Nutter A (2002) 'Intervening with foster infants' caregivers: targeting three critical needs', *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 23:5, pp. 541–554

Dozier M and Lindheim O (2006) 'This is my child: differences among foster parents in commitment to their young children', *Child Maltreatment*, 11, pp. 338–345

Dozier M, Lindheim O, Lewis E, Bick J, Bernard K and Peloso E (2009) 'Effects of a foster parent training program on young children's attachment behaviours: preliminary evidence from a randomised clinical trial', *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 26, pp. 321–332

Farmer E, Moyers S, and Lipscombe J (2004) *Fostering Adolescents*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Gilligan R (2009) *Promoting Resilience*, London: BAAF

Hojer I, Sebba J, and Luke N (2013) *The Impact of Fostering on Foster Carers' Children: An international literature review*, Oxford: Rees Centre

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) (Adoption and Fostering) (2013) *Annual Report 2012–13*, London: BAAF

Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) Cymru (2013), *Overview Report 2010–13*, London: BAAF

Luke N and Sebba J (2013) *How are Foster Carers Selected? An international literature review of instruments used within foster care selection*, Oxford: Rees Centre

Mather M and Lehner K (2010) *Evaluating Obesity in Substitute Carers*, London: BAAF

Quinton D, Rushton A, Dance C and Mayes D (1998), *Joining New Families: A study of adoption and fostering in middle childhood*, Bristol: John Wiley

Schofield G and Beek M (2008) *Achieving Permanence in Foster Care*, London: BAAF

Schofield G and Beek M (2014) *The Secure Base Model*, London: BAAF.

(www.uea.ac.uk/providingasecurebase)

Sinclair I (2005) *Fostering Now: Messages from research*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Sinclair I, Wilson K and Gibbs I (2005), *Foster Placements: Why they succeed and why they fail*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Slade J (2012) *Safer Caring: A new approach*, London: Fostering Network

Acknowledgements

In revising Form F in 2014, BAAF consulted widely with practitioners, academics and others through a survey and focus groups. Ian Sinclair, Judy Sebba and Nikki Luke at the Rees Centre made an invaluable contribution in helping us to think about the research evidence for what makes a good foster carer. Practitioner feedback in 2017 was very positive about Form F, and the few suggested minor changes have been incorporated into the latest version. The responsibility for the final version of this form rests entirely with the author.

Section A – Factual information

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| 1 | <p>The Fostering Services National Minimum Standards 2011 (23.6) requires that any person 'involved in assessing the suitability of persons to be foster carers are social workers, have experience of foster care and family placement work and are trained in assessment. Social work students and social workers who do not have relevant experience only carry out assessments under the supervision of an appropriately experienced social worker, who takes responsibility for the assessment.'</p> <p>Before beginning an assessment using Form F, it should be established that the assessing social worker is suitably qualified, trained and experienced. CoramBAAF runs regular training sessions on undertaking assessments using Form F</p> |
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	<p>(www.corambaaf.org.uk/training), and Chapman (2017) provides essential guidance for less experienced practitioners. Adams (2017) provides detailed guidance on undertaking checks and references as part of a fostering assessment.</p> <p>In situations where assessments are being undertaken by students or social workers without adequate experience, this should be under the supervision of a suitably experienced social worker, who is responsible for the quality of the work undertaken. In these circumstances, the names of both workers should be clearly stated on the form where a name is required, and both should sign the completed assessment.</p>
2	<p>The social worker should make a recommendation about the applicant(s) suitability to be approved as a foster carer, including any terms of approval. Care Planning, Placement and Case Review guidance (3.85) states that “Foster carer assessments are designed to identify the ages, number or needs of the children to whom the foster carer is most likely to offer the best care”.</p> <p>Regulation 25(1)(b) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended) states that where the fostering panel makes a recommendation about a person’s suitability to foster, it must also “recommend any terms on which the approval is to be given”, and guidance clarifies that this might be in terms of the number of children and their ages. Regulation 25(2)(a) states that the panel “must take into account all the information passed to it”, so if that information suggests to the panel that foster carers are suitable for a particular number of children, or children of a particular age range, then Panel’s function is to make a recommendation accordingly.</p> <p>Regulation 27(3) requires the decision-maker to take account of the fostering panel’s recommendation and any recommended terms for the approval. The decision maker would not be compliant with this regulation if they disregarded panel recommendations regarding terms of approval as a matter of routine, without being able to justify that in each individual case and setting out the reasons.</p> <p>It is not consistent with the Regulations or the guidance for the local authority to introduce a policy that seeks to restrict the fostering panel from exercising its duties and functions to consider the individual circumstances in each case, as required by regulation 25(1)(b). In other words, it is neither acceptable to ignore the requirement to consider terms of approval, nor to routinely approve foster carers for the age range 0–</p>

	<p>18 without evidencing in each individual case how they will be able to meet the needs of that whole age range. If it is clear that applicants are suitable to care for babies and infants, but not older children or teenagers, then this must be stipulated in their terms of approval.</p> <p>The assessing social worker will need to use the terminology that is used by the fostering service considering the application; this may include descriptors such as short-term, long-term, task-centred, permanent, respite, short-break, emergency, parent and child, or remand fostering.</p> <p>It is recommended that when describing age, the numbers used relate to the child's birthday. This means that for carers who cover the whole age span, then approval will be for children and young people aged 0–18, and approval for a child aged 5–11 allows for placement of a child on or after their fifth birthday, and up to their 11th birthday.</p> <p>It is essential that the recommendation about terms of approval made in this section is the same as the recommendation that is made in section E. Terms of approval can be changed through the fostering review process, and there are strong arguments to suggest that conservative approval terms are most appropriate for first-time foster carers.</p>
3	<p>Form F is designed to be used with prospective not existing foster carers, and so focusses on the changes that will be necessary if an applicant or applicants are approved to foster. It is not designed to be updated, and a good review using the CoramBAAF Form FR paperwork may be a better way to illustrate the strengths and abilities of existing foster carers. However, we know that many fostering services do update Form F and use this as a matching tool, even though we caution against this. We are often told that commissioners demand to see the Form F, and so fostering services have no option but to comply if they want placements. For that reason we have maintained a box to record when the form was updated. If fostering services do use the form for matching then they should ensure that any information within it that should not be shared is redacted. Please see 'Purpose of the assessment and use of Form F' on pages 3 and 4 above.</p>
4	<p>The pen picture of the applicant(s) and their family is an opportunity to paint a word picture that provides a context for those reading their assessment form. This section</p>

	<p>should be no longer than a page. Although it will be appropriate to involve the applicant(s) in writing this pen picture, the assessing worker is best placed to ensure that the most relevant information is provided.</p>
5	<p>If the applicant(s) address is not their permanent place of residence, provide details about this and explain how this is relevant to the fostering task. Also provide information about how checks have been undertaken if the applicant(s) have more than one address.</p>
6	<p>Although this information is not technically required as part of Stage 1 of the assessment, it has been included here to sit alongside other basic factual information about the family. Issues of identity are considered in more detail in Section B of the report.</p>
7	<p>Assessors should ask the applicant/s to define their own gender, sexual orientation and trans status. These issues should be covered in more depth, as appropriate, in Section B under the heading of identity, and throughout the report. When referring to the applicant/s families or networks, they too should define their own gender. For more information on assessing LGBT+ applicants, see de Jong and Donnelly (2015) and CoramBAAF Practice Note 69, <i>Assessing and Supporting Transgender Applicants to Foster and Adopt</i> (2018).</p>
8	<p>The Office for National Statistics provides a framework to standardise the identification of an individual's ethnic background. It is recommended that this framework is used as a starting point for identifying ethnicity with more detailed information and discussion of this given in Section B.</p> <p><u>White</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British 2. Irish 3. Gypsy or Irish Traveller 4. Any other White background, please describe <p><u>Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. White and Black Caribbean 6. White and Black African

	<p>7. White and Asian</p> <p>8. Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background, please describe</p> <p><u>Asian/Asian British</u></p> <p>9. Indian</p> <p>10. Pakistani</p> <p>11. Bangladeshi</p> <p>12. Chinese</p> <p>13. Any other Asian background, please describe</p> <p><u>Black/African/Caribbean/Black British</u></p> <p>14. African</p> <p>15. Caribbean</p> <p>16. Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please describe</p> <p><u>Other ethnic group</u></p> <p>17. Arab</p> <p>18. Any other ethnic group, please describe</p> <p>For further details, see:</p> <p>http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/measuring-equality/equality/index.html</p>
9	<p>If an applicant has had a child who died during childhood or adulthood, they should be included in the relevant section with the word “deceased” being added after describing their relationship to the applicant(s). This will need further discussion in Section B.</p>
10	<p>Former Partners. Adams (2017) addresses in detail the issues around seeking references from former partners, and assessors are expected to be familiar with this material. Each fostering service should have a policy setting out the requirement for former partner checks and the circumstances in which these will be undertaken, and Adams (2017) offers advice on what this policy might cover. CoramBAAF publishes a former partner check form and an interview record and analysis form that are available to those who hold the licence for using Form F.</p>

11	<p>Under Regulation 26(1A)(c) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended), where an applicant has been a foster carer in the previous 12 months, and a written reference from their previous fostering service is obtained, there is no requirement to also interview personal referees. However, the fostering service can seek verbal or written references if they choose to do so.</p>
12	<p>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 setting for undertaking DBS checks and Adams (2017) offers advice on what this policy might cover.</p>
13	<p>Health assessments. Regulation 26(1A)(a) and Schedule 3 Part 1, para 2 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended) require the assessment report to include details of the applicant(s) health supported by a medical report.</p> <p>Adams (2017) provides detailed information about adult health assessments, including how the process should work using CoramBAAF Form AH and how to interpret the information that comes out of the health assessment. He addresses specific issues including obesity, treated cancer, blood-borne virus infection, mental health, and lifestyle issues such as smoking and alcohol use. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.</p> <p>Good practice requires a report to be provided by a fostering service medical adviser, and their comments can be set out in this section of Form F, or alternately as a letter or report in Section C. The assessor should ensure that the medical adviser's comments are provided in full, and they should not be summarised or interpreted (except by that medical adviser). Where the applicant has health issues, these require careful analysis in terms of what the implications might be for fostering.</p>
14	<p>Home Local Authority Check. Adams (2017) describes the process and practice issues around local authority checks, and assessors are expected to be familiar with that material.</p>
15	<p>Household accommodation. Regulation 26(1A)(a) and Schedule 3 Part 1, para 5 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011(as amended) require a description of the</p>

	<p>applicant(s) accommodation, and this should be information that is relevant to the fostering task. This will include information about the general condition of the home that must be ‘adequately furnished and decorated [and] maintained to a good standard of cleanliness and hygiene throughout’ (NMS 10.2). It will also need to provide evidence that the foster home will be able to ‘comfortably accommodate all who live there’ (NMS 10.1), being aware that in most circumstances ‘each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom’ (NMS10.6).</p> <p>Descriptions of the neighbourhood and community will usually only need to be brief, although more detailed information may be necessary if, for example, the area has a known gang presence, is known for racial intolerance, or is very rural. The assessor will need to use their judgement in this respect. Where an applicant does not drive, it will be useful to comment on the availability of public transport and the implications of this for fostering.</p>
16	<p>Home Safety Checklist. CoramBAAF publishes a home safety checklist available to those who hold the licence for using Form F, and guidance about using this is provided in Adams (2017) and CoramBAAF Practice Note 61, <i>Home Safety Assessments in Fostering and Adoption</i>. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.</p> <p>In this section of Form F, the assessor is expected to state the date that the form was completed and to provide details of any outstanding matters. Some fostering services will want the completed checklist to be included in Section C, others will want a summary or final page, and others will not require any information other than what is set out in this section. This should be clearly set out in the fostering service’s policy.</p>
17	<p>Personal References. Regulation 26(1A)(c) and Schedule 3 Part 1, para 8 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 require that the assessor interviews at least two persons nominated by the prospective foster carers, and prepares a written report based on the information gathered (unless the applicant has been a foster carer within the previous 12 months and a reference has been provided).</p> <p>Adams (2017) provides detailed good practice guidance around seeking references and undertaking follow-up interviews, as well as offering advice on what fostering services should cover in their policies on personal references. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material. CoramBAAF also publishes a personal reference form and an</p>

	<p>interview record and analysis form that are available to those who hold the licence for using Form F.</p> <p>The requirements of the legislation requires references to be progressed at Stage 1 of the process, but there are strong practice arguments to suggest that interviews are most usefully undertaken towards the end of the assessment when the assessing worker has an understanding of the applicant(s) and is clear about what evidence remains outstanding. This might mean that referees are seen early in the process, and need to be contacted again at a later stage.</p>
18	<p>Verification of Documents. When checking documents in this section, it is expected that the assessor is able to see the original documents rather than photocopies.</p>
19	<p>Previous local authority checks. In some circumstances, a check with previous local authorities where applicants have lived will be necessary, and each fostering service should have a policy in this regard. Adams (2017) addresses these issues in detail, looking at both practice and policy issues, and assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.</p>
20	<p>Employment or voluntary activity. This section asks for the factual information about employment and the outcome of any employer checks. More detailed consideration of the impact of employment or occupation, especially around time available for fostering, will be considered in Section B.</p> <p>Most fostering services will require that current employers should be contacted to confirm the information given by the applicant(s) about their employment, and to gather evidence regarding their suitability to foster. Where applicants are involved in voluntary work, this should be considered in the same way as paid employment. Each fostering service should have a policy about requirements in relation to undertaking employer checks.</p> <p>Adams (2017) addresses practice and policy in relation to employer references, and assessors are expected to be familiar with that material. CoramBAAF also publishes an employment and voluntary activity form that is available to those who hold the licence for using Form F.</p>

21	<p>Previous employment and voluntary activity involving children or vulnerable adults. Most fostering services recognise the benefit of contacting previous employers where an applicant was working with children or vulnerable adults; to ensure that there were no safety or protection concerns, and to gather positive evidence regarding their suitability to foster.</p> <p>Adams (2017) covers this issue offering advice in relation to policy and practice. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material, and fostering services will need to have a policy setting out their practice in this regard. CoramBAAF also publishes an employment and voluntary activity form that is available to those who hold the licence for using Form F.</p>
22	<p>Household Finance. Adams (2017) covers the issue of financial assessments in some detail, setting out what needs to be assessed and advising on what needs to be covered in fostering service policy positions. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material. CoramBAAF also publishes a financial statement and checklist form that is available to those who hold the licence for using Form F.</p>
23	<p>Pets and animals. The issues around pets and animals are not straightforward and are considered by Adams (2015, 2017). Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.</p> <p>Each fostering service should have a policy about requirements in relation to undertaking questionnaires or assessments in relation to pets and animals, and CoramBAAF publishes a dog assessment form and pet assessment form that are available to those who hold the licence for using Form F.</p>
24	<p>Social media and internet checks. Fostering services are increasingly making checks using social networking websites and internet search engines, and each fostering service should have a policy in this regard. The issues are considered by Adams (2017) and in the BAAF Practice Note 55, <i>Using the Internet in Fostering and Adoption Assessments</i>. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.</p>
25	<p>School, nursery and health visitor checks. Adams (2017) provides detailed good practice guidance around seeking references from schools, nurseries and health visitors. Assessors are expected to be familiar with this material, and fostering services</p>

	<p>are expected to have policies setting out their practice in this regard. CoramBAAF also publishes a school and nursery reference form that is available to those who hold the licence for using Form F.</p>
26	<p>Other checks. Each fostering service will need to have a policy setting out the checks that it requires to be undertaken, and these might include overseas checks when applicants have spent long periods living abroad or checks with the NSPCC, for example. Adams (2017) discusses policy and practice issues in relation to both of these checks, and assessors are expected to be familiar with this material.</p> <p>This section of the Form F can also be used for any DBS checks that are undertaken in relation to non-household members. Adams (2017) provides details of when this might be permitted and appropriate.</p>

Section B – Description and analysis

1	<p>Family background and childhood (including education)</p> <p>This information is required under Regulation 26(2) of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended), and the assessor is being asked to consider the childhood experiences of the applicant(s), looking at relationships with parents, siblings and other significant family members. The descriptive element is usually provided as a broadly chronological account, and should also cover experience at school.</p> <p>It is important to give a flavour of the applicant(s) childhood and how they experienced life over these years, but this should not provide excessive detail. This can be a difficult balance to achieve, but the emphasis should be on the relevance of the information in understanding the impact of the past on the present, and in making sense of how the applicant(s) will “parent” a foster child. The analysis will need to consider what sense the applicant(s) has made of their childhood experiences, and how this has made them the person they are now.</p> <p>Social workers should pay attention during these interviews not only to the information provided by the applicant(s) but the quality of the response – the</p>
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coherence, economy and specificity of the applicant(s) account, and the extent to which they continue to be preoccupied with the past, to dismiss its significance or are confused or significantly uncertain about its meaning to them. Any gaps or discrepancies in accounts will need to be explored further with the applicant(s).

This should enable the assessing social worker to come to a view about the extent to which the applicant has resolved past traumas or losses; has the capacity to make and sustain close relationships; is able to empathise and understand other people's feelings; and be able to reflect on emotive matters. These are factors that will also be evident for couples, in the stability and permanence of their relationship and for individual applicants in relationships that form part of their social network.

The work of Dozier *et al* (2002), Dozier (2005), Dozier and Lindhiem (2006) and Dozier *et al* (2009) has considerable relevance to these considerations:

'The strongest predictor of attachment among children...is parent "state of mind with regard to attachment"...Parents of secure children tend to be coherent in their presentation of attachment-related events. These parents of secure children are said to have "autonomous states of mind"...We found that when foster parents had autonomous states of mind, their foster children were likely to have secure attachments....children who had experienced early adversity were unable to organise their attachments unless they had a caregiver who was nurturing (characteristic of an autonomous caregiver).

Parents of avoidant children tend to be dismissive of attachment-related issues, and are said to have "dismissive states of mind". Parents of resistant children tend to be caught up in earlier attachment issues, and are said to have "preoccupied states of mind". Parents who have unresolved issues regarding loss or trauma are said to have "unresolved states of mind" and are most likely to have children with disorganised attachments [and] disorganised attachment is most highly related to later psychopathology.'

(Dozier *et al*, 2009, p. 324)

	<p>In thinking about these issues, the assessor needs to be careful not to oversimplify the issues, and must be mindful that having a happy childhood is not in itself a good indicator of subsequent parenting state of mind. There is evidence to suggest that foster carers who had unhappy childhoods, but have resolved the issues arising from this, are the most successful foster carers (Dando and Minty, 1987; and see Section B – note 11 below).</p> <p>For Schofield and Beek (2014), this translates into whether applicant(s) are emotionally available to the child, having successfully resolved traumatic events, losses and separations, and the extent to which applicants can demonstrate openness and availability in their close relationships with others. It is important to remember that family history is only important insofar as it links to how the applicant(s) manages relationships in the present, and how this in turn impacts on fostering capacity. (See Section C for information about using family trees and chronologies.)</p> <p>Within this section, it is also important to consider the applicant(s) experience of school and education, and to get their views about how this has impacted on their life chances. It will be necessary to discuss this in the context of how the applicant(s) might meet and support any fostered children in school, and promote a positive learning experience.</p>
2	<p>Adult life (including employment and previous relationships)</p> <p>History of employment and information about previous relationships is required under Regulation 26(2) and Schedule 3 Part 2 para 14 & 15 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended). This information is important in getting a sense of the applicant(s) and their life experiences, and in many ways this section is a chronological continuation of the applicant(s) life story.</p> <p>Again, the information will be important in conveying how the applicant(s) past has made them into the person they have become, providing information about whether they have achieved stability in their lives, how they might have managed stresses and difficulties, and what they have learned about themselves that will be relevant in relation to fostering children and young</p>

	<p>people. Adult functioning will also be a good measure of the extent to which past traumas and difficulties may have been successfully resolved.</p> <p>The information in this section effectively concludes the historical considerations and brings the story to the present time. This section should not be overly lengthy, and should aim to provide a context for understanding the applicant(s) and their suitability to foster.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Personality and current relationship</p> <p>Regulation 26(2) and Schedule 3 Part 2 para 1,15 &16 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended) require the assessment to provide details of the applicant(s) personality and current relationship. The assessor will be able to make judgements about the applicant(s) personality based on their self-reporting, views of their partner if they have one, views of birth children where the applicant has children, and from the range of references and other information available. It will be important to check that a consistent picture is emerging from all these sources and to explore matters further if this is not the case.</p> <p>Luke and Sebba (2013, p. 5) describe ‘empathy for children, nurturing qualities and flexibility’ as “desirable” foster carer attributes’ and these qualities might be evident in discussions about personality. Similarly, an ability to get on well with others in everyday life might be seen as a positive indicator in terms of being able to work well with others as part of a professional team. One study of adolescents in foster carer (Farmer <i>et al</i>, 2004) associates foster carer(s) with an optimistic approach with placement success, and advocates of resilience theory (Gilligan, 2009) have made the same point. However, in considering personality, the assessor will need to be careful not to over-generalise or give too much weight to this aspect, as people can respond differently in different situations, and certain other attributes might be beneficial for certain types of fostering.</p> <p>The assessment of the stability and permanence of a couple’s relationship should include the history of that relationship, how well it works, and the couple’s commitment to it. It should explore what has tested the relationship,</p>

	<p>and how the partners support each other and meet each other’s emotional needs. It will be necessary to consider how well the relationship works for both parties, to look at vulnerabilities, and to reflect with the applicants about the potential impact of fostering on their relationship.</p> <p>In assessing a couple, it will be necessary to consider their approach to parenting, as it will be important that they have a shared understanding, and an ability to work effectively together.</p>
4	<p>Household members (including children) and lifestyle</p> <p>This section asks the assessor to provide information about all other household members, adults and children, and is required under Regulation 26(2)(a) and Schedule 3 Part 2 para 14 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (as amended). This section should also include information about the applicant(s) lifestyle, leisure and recreation.</p> <p>In relation to all household members, the assessor should provide a brief pen picture describing personality, ethnicity, and the current education or employment of each person. Everyone in the household should be interviewed as part of the fostering assessment, and information from these interviews could be set out in this section or as stand-alone items in Section C, but information should not be repeated. If children or adults provide information that they are not willing to share with the applicant(s), this must be contained in Section C and not shared with the applicant(s).</p> <p>Research about the impact of birth children and other children in the household on fostering outcomes is inconclusive and ‘the presence of other children in placement can cause difficulties but it can also help’ (Sinclair, 2005, p. 78). Hojer <i>et al</i> (2013) suggest that there is some evidence of an increased risk of placement breakdown where foster carers have their own children living at home, but note that the evidence is contradictory. However, they do suggest that where children are consulted, listened to, involved and prepared, then they are likely to be better placed to support their parent’s fostering. In Schofield and Beek (2014), the family membership dimension of the Secure Base Model looks at the extent to which the family is able to admit</p>

	<p>and embrace new members.</p> <p>In providing information about lifestyle and leisure, the assessor has the opportunity to give a good picture of the family in day-to-day life, describing how a foster child might experience the home. It is important to be aware that Sinclair <i>et al</i> (2005) found that placements were less likely to disrupt where carers took part in and enjoyed joint activities with their foster children, and so applicant(s) lifestyles need to be considered in relation to having, or being able to make, time for these things. The assessment should therefore cover existing work patterns and whether these might change if the applicant(s) are approved to foster.</p>
5	<p>Other children (including adults) and social/support network</p> <p>This section should include information about all other children (including adult children) who are not living in the household. For each of them, the assessor should provide a brief pen picture describing personality, ethnicity, and their current education or employment. It is important to provide information about their relationship with the applicant(s), and to consider how fostering might impact on them and the relationship with their parent(s). Where relationships are tense, difficult, or non-existent, this will need careful analysis. Children living outside of the home should normally be interviewed as part of the assessment, and issues of confidentiality will need to be considered (as discussed above).</p> <p>The stresses of fostering are well recognised, and the need for structured formal support is recognised in the legislative framework. However, in practice foster carers often feel the benefits of support from family and friends, and Sinclair (2005, p. 84) notes that ‘carers who received a lot of support from their own children (including adult children who lived at home or nearby) had fewer disruptions’. Where foster carers are isolated, it is likely that placements will be more vulnerable to disruption, and the implications of this will need careful consideration.</p> <p>In this section, the assessor is required to set out the supportive relationships that already exist within the applicant(s) network, and provide information</p>

	<p>about the type and quality of support that they might be able to access in a fostering context. This needs to be specific and cover practical situations that are likely to emerge. Some fostering services require applicant(s) to have nominated back-up carers, and while rigid positions like this are often unhelpful, if this is the case, then this will need to be considered in the course of the assessment. Where support is limited, the assessor should explore how applicant(s) might be able to develop a more supportive network.</p> <p>(See Section C for information about using ecomaps).</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>Caring for children: providing warmth, empathy and encouragement</p> <p>In this section, the assessor is asked to provide information about the applicant(s) experience and abilities in relation to caring for children, with evidence being provided about the quality of those relationships in terms of warmth, empathy and commitment. This may relate to birth children, children of friends or relatives, or children who have been known in professional or other work capacities.</p> <p>It is important to be aware that Sinclair <i>et al</i> (2005) identified positive outcomes for foster carers who were caring, accepting, encouraging, and able to see things from the child’s perspective. These carers were good at listening to and talking to children and young people, and made time to do activities with the child, including teaching life skills. Where foster carers were apathetic, rejecting or intolerant, this was associated with poor outcomes. For Schofield and Beek (2014), this is covered in the sensitivity and acceptance dimensions of the secure base model.</p> <p>In providing information about child care experience, it is expected that the assessor will consider this in relation to what this means for the fostering task, the type of fostering being considered and the proposed age range of the children. If the applicant(s) are looking to foster children across the whole age range, then they would be expected to have experience across a broadly similar span, yet taking account of any transferable skills.</p> <p>It is always challenging for assessors where applicant(s) have had only limited experience of caring for children or young people. In these cases, one</p>

	<p>option is to assist the applicant(s) with getting relevant experience before they are assessed to foster. The other option is to look at transferable skills and experiences, and talk with applicant(s) about how they would approach the task of looking after children in all respects. In such a scenario, it might be more difficult to find evidence to suggest suitability to foster, but this will depend on the specific circumstances of the case.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>Caring for children: providing structure and boundaries</p> <p>This section asks about the ability of applicant(s) to provide clear structure and boundaries for children in their care, being mindful that children in need of fostering will usually have experienced abuse and neglect that might impact on their behaviour.</p> <p>Research evidence (Quinton <i>et al</i>, 1998; Sinclair <i>et al</i>, 2005) suggests that successful outcomes are most likely where foster carers are able to effectively offer routine and structure, have clear expectations, set boundaries and manage behaviour. Sinclair (2005, p. 81) notes that in a fostering context this is not straightforward as it requires sensitivity, emotional robustness, and focus on the reinforcement of positive behaviour. Schofield and Beek (2014) emphasise the need to work cooperatively with children and young people by setting firm boundaries but being willing to negotiate within them.</p> <p>Again, the issues of structure and boundaries will need to be considered in the context of the type of fostering and age range of children that is being considered. The structure that is needed in the form of routines for babies will be very different to the boundary-setting that might be needed on a specialist scheme for challenging teenagers.</p>
<p>8</p>	<p>Caring for children: providing durability, resilience, and commitment</p> <p>A successful foster carer will need to be durable and resilient if they are going to be able to provide a placement for the length of time that is required, and to avoid unnecessary placement moves. Children and young people are clear that they want foster carers who will “stick with them”, advocate for them, and show a commitment over and above what is required in legislation (Sinclair <i>et al</i>, 2005). This will require considerable patience from foster carers who need</p>

	<p>to be realistic, persistent, and not expect immediate success.</p> <p>Research by Dozier <i>et al</i> (2002), Dozier (2005), Dozier and Lindheim (2006) and Dozier <i>et al</i> (2009) with younger foster children also concludes that positive outcomes for these children, including placement stability, can be predicted by the extent to which foster carers are committed to them, and interestingly suggests that the propensity for foster carers to commit to children tends to reduce over time when foster carers have looked after a series of children. Put another way, ‘experience and commitment...are inversely related’ (Dozier and Lindheim, 2006, p. 343).</p> <p>Dozier (2005) and others make the point that whereas birth children will usually seek out appropriate nurturing, foster children will tend to push carers away, despite being especially in need of nurturing care, and where children are avoidant, foster carers can tend to follow this lead and respond in kind. Demonstrating commitment in this context is both necessary and demanding.</p> <p>Assessing applicant(s) in relation to their ability to manage the stresses of fostering and maintain placements at times of challenge is a difficult task. If applicant(s) have parented or cared for challenging children or young people then the evidence will be more easily available, but many applicants will have not been tested in this way. The assessment will therefore need to look at how they have managed other stresses, whether they have stuck with things that were difficult, and whether they are realistic about what is going to be asked of them.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Working effectively with professionals and birth family</p> <p>Systems theory helps us to understand that the success of a placement will often depend on how well the different parties can work together in the best interests of the child, and foster carers will be expected to play their part in this. IRM reports from both England (2013) and Wales (2013) show that issues about working openly and honestly with professionals is a regular feature in the cases they consider where things have gone wrong. Foster carers are expected to work closely with other members of the fostering team, social workers, birth parents, schools and others. This is not always</p>

	<p>straightforward in the often pressured context that foster carers operate within.</p> <p>In assessing suitability against this particular quality, assessors will need to use the information gathered throughout the assessment, taking account of the various references and checks that have been undertaken, and that relate to both professional and private life. Where an applicant is also a parent, there will likely be evidence to consider from their child’s school. It will also be necessary to consider how the applicant(s) presented in the preparation training, and how they responded to the challenge of the assessment process, including their ability to complete set tasks, and to reflect on feedback when provided.</p> <p>It is important that foster carers are cooperative and flexible since the role demands this, but they should not be unfairly judged for “standing up for themselves”, having opinions (if expressed appropriately), or holding the fostering service to account. Foster carers will often have to advocate with other professionals for children in their care, and being able to do this in a confident but measured fashion can be a positive attribute.</p> <p>In addition to working with professionals, foster carers are usually required to work with children’s birth families. This might be in the course of contact or at formal meetings, or where parents and carers attend medical appointments or school meetings together. In some situations, it will be appropriate for the carers to provide the birth family with photographs and other information about their child’s development and well-being.</p> <p>The assessment will need to consider their understanding of these issues, the applicant’s attitudes toward birth families, and how they might likely be able to manage the difficult feelings that often accompany this aspect of fostering.</p> <p>The assessor will also need to consider the practical issues around availability for contact in order to meet these requirements while not imposing unrealistic demands on themselves and their family.</p>
10	<p>Understanding identity and diversity</p> <p>Paragraphs 3.43–3.48 of the Statutory Guidance on Fostering Services</p>

require that 'every individual child who is looked after should be cared for in a way that respects, recognises, supports and celebrates their identity' and that foster carers 'should ensure that full attention is paid to the individual child's gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability they might have'.

However, it is important to recognise that not all applicants will have a sophisticated understanding of all of the issues at the time they are being assessed as foster carers, and what is most important is that they have the appropriate value base and willingness to learn if their understanding is limited. Not all applicants will have had the opportunities for learning about identity and diversity, or life experiences that may have exposed them to different societal groups or individuals, and the assessment will need to take account of this fact. Many foster carers who have been approved with a rudimentary understanding of the issues have gone on to develop a much more sophisticated understanding, and have proved themselves as very capable foster carers.

In considering these issues, it makes sense to start with the applicant(s) view of their own identity (class, racial and ethnic, gender, sexual, cultural, language and spiritual) and to explore their understanding of what this means for them. Subsequent discussions will need to consider their experience of and attitude to diversity, and look at what this might mean in terms in being able to promote the identity needs of fostered children.

At the time of approval, it is necessary for applicants to have an approach that values difference in society, and accepts individual children for who they are. Applicants should also demonstrate a willingness to learn about other cultures or issues as appropriate to the needs of individual children in their care, and a more general willingness to develop their understanding of the issues. Where applicants display inflexible, judgemental or discriminatory thinking, this will need careful consideration in relation to how this might impact on the fostering task.

11

Motivation, timing of application, and anticipated impact of fostering

It is helpful in considering applicant suitability to understand their motivation for fostering; what is it that they want to get out of it? The assessor will need to be clear about why the applicant(s) have applied at this particular time, and how this has been considered in relation to all household members.

Motivation needs to be explicitly stated to provide a context for other information in the report, and in order to consider whether plans are realistic.

The limited research in this area (see Dando and Minty, 1987; Delfabbro *et al*, 2002) suggests that certain motivation is positively correlated to successful outcomes. Dando and Minty (1987) suggest that motivation that comes from strong personal needs is a positive thing, and correlates with successful fostering. They identify three sub-groups who fall into this category:

- Couples or individuals who have a strong desire to parent when biological conception is not possible.
- Applicants who want to foster for altruistic reasons or out of a sense of social concern.
- Applicants who identify with deprived children because of their own poor childhood experiences, but where they have made sense of those experiences and shown resilience in surviving them and achieving emotional maturity in adulthood.

Dando and Minty (1987) found that carers who described having an unhappy childhood were rated more positively by social workers than those who felt their childhood had been a happy one. However, 'where applicants have experienced an unhappy or deprived childhood, it is vital to establish whether or not they have built up emotional reserves and are capable of giving' (Dando and Minty, 1987, p. 385).

Where motivation was vague, such as liking children, outcomes are not predicted to be so positive. Not surprisingly, the same was true where the motivation was about using children for the applicant(s) own needs, such as for companionship, replacing deceased children, or for financial reasons.

	<p>However, it is important to be careful before concluding that someone is financially motivated. While financial reasons alone would be a concerning motivation, the choice of a “career” in foster care as an alternative to other paid employment is entirely legitimate, so long as other positive factors are also present. Also, it should be remembered that this research is limited, and motivation needs to be considered alongside other factors about suitability.</p> <p>In this section, the assessor should also be thinking with the applicant(s) about how fostering might impact on their current lifestyle; what might need to change, and how any changes will need to be managed. It is about trying to make sure the applicant(s) are as prepared as they can be for what is generally recognised to be a significant challenge. These discussions are also important in helping the assessor to check that the applicant(s) are realistic about fostering, and have a full understanding of how this will impact on them.</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Understanding of safer caring</p> <p>Research evidence shows that allegations against foster carers are relatively common, with somewhere between 10–31 per cent of foster carers being subject to an allegation. Allegations are usually extremely distressing, have a significant impact on the well-being of foster carers, and are one of the most common reasons cited for ceasing to foster. IRM reports from both England (2013) and Wales (2013) reveal that safeguarding issues, including allegations of abuse and inability to provide safe care, are amongst the most common reasons associated with not approving, or terminating the approval of foster carers.</p> <p>This suggests that during assessment, particular consideration needs to be given to whether the applicant(s) have a good understanding of safer caring issues, and whether they can apply this understanding in practice. Safer caring will be covered in preparation training, but should additionally be discussed as part of the home study, and applicant(s) would do well to undertake reading on this subject (such as Slade, 2012).</p> <p>Good practice demands that applicant(s) produce a safer caring plan for their family, and subject to the policy of the fostering service, this should be</p>

	<p>included in Section C of the assessment report. Fostering services will likely have their own format for safer caring plans, and should have a policy on safer caring to accompany this.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Preparation, completed training, and future development needs</p> <p>This section should contain information about how the applicant(s) have been prepared for fostering through formal preparation training, and through the process of the home study. It is good practice for the trainers to meet with the applicant(s) and their assessing social worker at the end of the preparation course to discuss their view of the applicant(s) principal areas of learning during preparation and any further areas that should be addressed.</p> <p>The assessor should provide factual information about the course attended, the subject matter considered, and other information about how the applicant(s) made use of the training, what they learned, and what was learned about them and their ability to make use of such input. It may be that details are provided within this section, or alternatively a report can be included in Section C, but information should not be repeated. The assessor may wish to make use of the 'Preparation training record' form (see additional tools and resources).</p> <p>Information should also be provided about the applicant(s) understanding and expectations about children who need to be fostered, their background characteristics, and experiences of abuse and neglect. They need to understand how this will have likely impacted on these children and young people, and the implications of this for those who are caring for them. Additionally, applicant(s) need to understand the differences between fostering and parenting a birth child; recognising what this means in terms of responsibility; and having a basic understanding of the roles of the different people in the system.</p> <p>The analysis that goes with this information will need to consider whether the applicant(s) have been sufficiently prepared for the role that they are looking to take on, and whether they have a realistic understanding of what is expected of foster carers.</p>

The assessor will also need to indicate any areas for future training or development that have emerged in the course of the assessment, and this information can be provided in this section and/or as a personal development plan in Section C. Completion of Training, Support and Development Standards will inevitably form a significant part of proposed work.

Section B – Additional notes for short break fostering

Form F has been designed so that it can be used equally effectively for short break fostering as for any other type of fostering. The information provided in the notes above will usually apply equally to short-break fostering, but not always, and the focus of the assessment will of course be different. For example, a strong support network is less of an issue for short break carers, and promoting formal education is not a primary consideration, but they will still need to provide a stimulating learning environment for children. It is expected that assessors complete the entire form with short break fostering in mind, for example, thinking about accessibility when discussing issues of accommodation. Checks and references that are part of a safeguarding approach should be applied equally to prospective short break carers as to any other foster carers. The following notes correlate to the numbered items in Section B and will help assessors to think about specific areas they need to focus on.

6 Caring for children: providing warmth, empathy and commitment. In discussions about caring for children, there is an obvious expectation that applicant(s) will need to be asked about caring for disabled children, their understanding of the social model of disability, and some of the more common conditions such as autistic spectrum disorders.

Assessors will need to explore with applicant(s) any experience in caring for disabled children, and/or about how their experience of caring for non-disabled children may have prepared them for this particular group. It will be necessary to look at whether they have or can develop the skills to manage the various complex care needs of disabled children, including issues around health management and moving and handling.

	<p>This section also requires the assessor to consider how well the applicant(s) will be able to communicate with children. In relation to short break fostering, it will be necessary to consider their understanding of the communication needs of disabled children, and their ability to meet these through the use of methods such as BSL, Makaton, Signs & Symbols, Story Boards, PECS and the like.</p>
7	<p>Caring for children: providing structure and boundaries. Setting structure and boundaries for non-disabled children can sometimes be quite different from managing the behaviour of challenging disabled children. It is important that short break carers have appropriate strategies for doing this, and have an understanding of the sort of challenges that they might face.</p>
9	<p>Working effectively with others. Short break carers will need to work closely with social workers and children’s parents or carers, and the assessment should explore with them the sort of issues that might arise. In some ways, the issues will be similar to working with other birth parents in a fostering context, but there are specific aspects that relate to short break arrangements where the short break carer is not the principal caregiver. Short break carers will need to have a good understanding of the specific issues affecting families of disabled children.</p>
10	<p>Understanding identity and diversity. It is essential that short break carers have good disability awareness, understand and use appropriate language and terminology, and implement a social model of disability. They will need to demonstrate understanding around advocacy for disabled children and young people, be able to challenge discrimination, and promote rights to inclusion and integration in society. Where applicant(s) do not have this knowledge or understanding, the assessor will need to consider with the applicant(s) how they develop this through training, reading or other developmental work.</p> <p>At the same time as looking at disability issues, it is important to also remember that disabled children have other identity needs arising from issues such as ethnicity, religion, culture, gender, and sexuality. Short break carers will need to meet this range of needs alongside other more obvious needs.</p>

14	<p>Understanding of safer caring. It is recognised that disabled children are more at risk of abuse and neglect than non-disabled children, and in this context there can be no suggestion that safeguarding elements of the assessment be relaxed for short break carers. Short break carers will also need to have a good understanding of safer caring issues, as they can be complicated with disabled children, especially where they have high dependency or intimate care needs.</p>
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Section B – Additional notes for carers of unaccompanied migrant children

Form F is suitable for assessing foster carers of unaccompanied migrant children (UMC), and many of the skills needed for fostering other children and young people will apply equally to carers wanting to look after this specific group. The information provided in the notes above will in most cases be equally relevant to prospective carers interested in fostering UMC, but there may be aspects of the assessment that will have a different emphasis or detail. The following notes correlate to the numbered items in Section B and will help assessors to think about the specific areas they may need to explore.

Thank you to David Roth at Waltham Forrest for raising the issue of assessing foster carers for UMC using Form F, and for sharing the material that he had developed.

6	<p>Caring for children: providing warmth, empathy and commitment. Within the assessment, there is an expectation that applicant(s) will need to be asked about their experiences and knowledge around caring for UMC. Assessors will need to explore with applicant(s) how their life experiences may have prepared them for looking after children from this particular group. Have the applicant(s) had experience of supporting someone through the asylum-seeking process, or have they lived in any of the countries where UMC may come from?</p> <p>Many UMC will have suffered trauma or abuse, in their home country or during their journey to the UK. They may have witnessed the deaths of friends, family or travelling companions, and their own lives may have been put at risk. This might become evident in placement by the young person’s behaviour –</p>
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	<p>seeming fearful or mistrustful, having night terrors and sleep disorders or appearing extremely self-sufficient and resilient. Applicants must be in a position to support young people to come to terms with often extreme life experiences and to be able to help them regulate emotions. Some UMC may have arrived in the UK as the result of being trafficked, and foster carers will need to be alert to signs that this might be the case (see pages 19–21 of: www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-who-may-have-been-trafficked-practice-guidance).</p> <p>However, it is important not to over-focus on needs, deficits and suffering. Many young people will come with experiences of being nurtured well in their families of origin, and come with strengths, aspirations and joy. Foster carers can help bring back the routines of ordinary family life.</p>
10	<p>Understanding identity and diversity. All foster carers who are caring for a child from a different cultural or ethnic background will need to have a good understanding of identity and diversity issues, but this is especially relevant for applicants who want to foster UMC.</p> <p>Many UMC will only have experienced a way of life that is significantly different to anything in the UK, even allowing for the culturally diverse populations that make up the UK. Carers may find that the young person expresses strong disapproval of certain aspects of their way of life or family relationships, and may have strong views on appropriate gender roles. The whole concept of foster care may be unfamiliar to them. The assessor will need to explore the applicant’s understanding of these issues, and how they anticipate managing these challenges. The fostering task will involve helping young people to adapt to life outside the home, such as learning how to use public transport, use check-out tills at the supermarket, and how to enrol at college.</p> <p>There is also the issue of language to consider. The assessor will need to explore whether the applicant(s) has any language skills that may be an asset in this context, or whether they have experience of communicating with someone with whom they don’t share a language. Has the applicant(s) considered how they might communicate with a young person who speaks</p>

	<p>little or no English?</p> <p>At the same time, it is important to avoid sentimentalising sameness and making difference a burden to be overcome. Building bridges from a shared sense of being human together is just as important as understanding habits and customs that are different.</p>
<p>11</p>	<p>Motivation, timing of application, and anticipated impact of fostering. Foster carers can never guarantee that there will be positive outcomes for the children they look after, but UMC are particularly vulnerable. Applicants will need to consider how they will manage the uncertainties that accompany caring for a child who is seeking asylum. Their asylum claim might be unsuccessful, and even if they make an appeal it is possible that asylum might not be granted. This will likely be difficult for everyone and the foster carer may be expected to help prepare the young person to return to their home country. In these circumstances, the foster carer may lose contact with the young person, and applicants will need to consider how they will manage their feelings if this happens.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Preparation, completed training, and future development needs. Many fostering services will offer training to foster carers about caring for UMC. This will likely remind carers that they will need to approach discussions about the young person’s personal details and background with sensitivity. Many UMC will not freely provide accurate information about their age and experiences, possibly because they are scared or they have been given a cover story that they have been told will protect them. While many UMC will open up as they settle into a foster placement and begin to trust their foster carers, they need to be allowed to do this at their own pace.</p> <p>Foster carers also need to be prepared for the demands that might be made of them that are specific to fostering UMC, such as attending Home Office Immigration Offices, being present at the young person’s interviews with immigration officials, and taking the young person for regular appointments with the lawyer representing their case.</p>

Section C – Supporting information

In putting together an assessment report using Form F, it is necessary that the assessor carefully considers issues of confidentiality in terms of both third party information, but also information about one or other applicant (if assessing a couple), that has not been shared with the other. Any third party information that is not available to the applicant(s) should be clearly marked, and presented in Section C. Where there are issues about information that has been withheld from one applicant only, the particular issue will need careful consideration in terms of thinking about openness and honesty in the relationship. If this has been done, and information has not been shared openly, then again, this information should be presented in Section C, clearly marked so that the reader is aware of who has seen it.

<p>1</p>	<p>Family trees provide a readily accessible picture of current family relationships and significant members of the family over generations, and can help assessors to explore family patterns and dynamics. They also provide an important focus for understanding the impact of the past on the present and the way that separations, losses, transitions and trauma have been a part of the applicant(s) life experience.</p> <p>The completion of a family tree is a well-established part of a home study assessment, not just for the information it contains, but for the opportunity it provides for applicants to discuss the significance of people and events in their lives. Although there is no research base for the use of family trees, the applicant(s) readiness to engage in the task in an open and reflective manner without either becoming dismissive or preoccupied may be helpful and indicative of the applicant(s) emotional well-being and state of mind.</p> <p>For more information about constructing a family tree, with information about symbols to use and an exemplar, please see Chapman (2017).</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>An ecomap is used to represent in a picture format the applicant(s), their immediate family and the connections that they have with others in their community. Ecomaps are drawn by placing the family household at the centre of the drawing and then enclosing this in a circle. Individuals then identify the people with whom they have relationships outside of the household and this</p>

	<p>should include groups or organisations in the community that are of significance. Assessors need to be clear that although an ecomap might be included as evidence with Section C, it is primarily a tool to aid discussion and reflection, and is not an end in itself. For more information about constructing an ecomap, please see Chapman (2017).</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Good practice requires applicants to complete a chronology that covers key events in their lives such as births, deaths of family members, major health events, divorce and separations, start of new relationships, address moves, school changes and changes of employment. It should be clear in the chronologies where employment or volunteering included the care of or work with children, and this information should be entered into the appropriate part of Section A so it is clear that references have been sought. Chronologies should be in date order, starting with birth until the present day, and there should be no gaps or unaccounted periods of time. A separate chronology should be completed for each applicant if they are a couple, and a format is provided for collecting this information (see additional tools and resources).</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>The preparation training record (see additional tools and resources) is designed to be completed by the trainer who runs the preparation group training event(s) that the applicant(s) attends. The trainer is expected to provide details about the dates of the event(s), and a basic summary of the content. They are then asked to comment on the applicant(s) learning as they observed this, and the extent to which the applicant(s) was able to participate effectively in the learning environment. If any issues arose during the training that required further discussion or consideration, the trainer should note this. A separate form should be used for each applicant.</p> <p>It is important to be clear that this form is for use by the preparation group trainer and information contained within it should influence the assessor's work. In Section B12, the assessor should address the issue of preparation and training more holistically, and in Section B15 should identify future training and development needs for each applicant.</p>

5	<p>Second opinion visits are a useful tool in circumstances where there are issues of concern identified by the assessor, where there is some doubt about whether to recommend the applicant(s) as suitable, or where there have been difficulties in the working relationship between the assessor and applicant(s). This visit can be undertaken by another social worker in the team, an independent social worker, the supervisor, or team manager, and should be written up as a report in Section C. This report should not duplicate information that is already in the main assessment, but should focus on particular areas of contention or difficulty, and should set out the position of the second assessor on these matters. Where they support or contradict the views of the original assessor, the reasons for this should be clearly set out. A format is available for presenting this information (see additional tools and resources).</p>
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Section D – Specialist reports

1	<p>Parent and child report. Parent and child fostering is becoming increasingly common, and assessors need to understand how this differs from other types of fostering. An additional parent and child report form is available for use with Form F (see additional tools and resources).</p> <p>In using this form, it is essential that the assessor uses their judgement and does not repeat information that is already presented in the main body of the report. Some applicant(s) will be assessed for fostering more generally, and in these circumstances the main Form F can be used to focus on what is required for fostering children, and the parent and child report will cover those aspects particular to that type of fostering. In other cases, the applicant(s) will only want to be considered for parent and child fostering, and in this case the assessor will need to complete Form F with this in mind. If the questions in the parent and child report have already been completed in the main body of Form F then this should be noted and cross-referenced, not repeated.</p> <p>Adams and Dibben (2011) describe good practice in parent and child fostering, and Chapter 4 of this text addresses the specific issue of assessment and approval. Where assessors are considering applicant(s) for parent and child</p>
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	<p>fostering, they should be familiar with the content of this publication, and Chapter 4 offers detailed notes that effectively mirror the sections in the parent and child report.</p>
2	<p>Permanent fostering report. While some people distinguish between permanent and long-term fostering, this form uses permanent fostering to refer to both; distinguishing it from short-term or task-centred fostering. Much of what is relevant in the assessment of all foster carers is applicable equally with permanent carers, but there are some additional aspects, and a permanent fostering report form is available for use with Form F (see additional tools and resources).</p> <p>Schofield and Beek (2008) describe good practice in permanent fostering, and in Chapter 8 of that text recommend assessment against the five dimensions of the secure base model. Where assessors are considering applicant(s) who want to offer permanent fostering, they should be familiar with the content of this publication. Chapman (2017) also offers useful advice about assessing for permanence.</p>
3	<p>Other reports. Where fostering services have specialist fostering schemes, it may be appropriate for additional reports to be presented that address the specific requirements of that scheme.</p>

Section E – Summary and recommendation

1	<p>NMS 14.4 requires the fostering panel to make its recommendation on the suitability of the applicant(s) within eight months of the application to be assessed. If the fostering service has not met this standard, then an explanation should be provided.</p>
2	<p>This section should be a summary of information that has been set out in earlier parts of the report, and should bring together the issues that have been considered throughout. The assessor should highlight the applicant(s) strengths and any vulnerabilities or concerns, and weigh these up against each other.</p>

3	It is essential that this recommendation is the same as the recommendation given on the front sheet. See note 2 in section A (above).
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Form F should only be used by registered social workers who have read, understood, and are familiar with the accompanying guidance notes ⁽¹⁾

FRONT SHEET

Name of applicant(s)	
Fostering service reference number	
Social worker's recommendation ⁽²⁾	
Name of fostering service	
Address	
Name of social worker	
Email	
Telephone	
Name of team manager	
Email	
Telephone	

Prospective Foster Carer Report (Form F) England

Date application accepted	
Date assessment completed	
Date assessment updated ⁽³⁾	

Pen picture of the applicant(s) ⁽⁴⁾

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SECTION A (PART 1)

APPLICANT 1

Family name			
Previous name			
Forenames			
Other “known by” names			
Date of birth		Age	
Place of birth			

APPLICANT 2

Family name			
Previous name			
Forenames			
Other “known by” names			
Date of birth		Age	
Place of birth			

HOME ADDRESS

Address ⁽⁵⁾	
Length of time at this address	

IDENTITY ⁽⁶⁾

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Gender ⁽⁷⁾		
Sexual orientation ⁽⁷⁾		

Nationality		
Ethnicity ⁽⁸⁾		
Primary language spoken in the home		
Other language/s spoken in the home		
Religion or faith group		
Practising or non-practising		
Does the applicant identify as disabled?		
Does the applicant identify as trans?⁽⁷⁾		

PARTNERSHIP STATUS

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
If the applicant is married or has registered a civil partnership, give date and place of marriage/registration		
If the applicant is living with a partner, date on which they set up a household together		

CHILDREN UNDER 18 LIVING IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

OTHER ADULTS LIVING IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

CHILDREN (UNDER 18) FROM A CURRENT OR PREVIOUS PARTNERSHIP LIVING ELSEWHERE ⁽⁹⁾

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

ADULT CHILDREN LIVING ELSEWHERE ⁽⁹⁾

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

FORMER PARTNERS ⁽¹⁰⁾

APPLICANT 1

Name of former partner	Date relationship ended	Date of reference

Information should be provided where the applicant has separated, divorced or dissolved a civil partnership, or where they have set up home with a previous partner. Former partner references or write-ups of interviews with former partners may be included in Section C. Set out any contra-indications arising from former partner checks and how they have been considered/addressed, or alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report. Give details if any checks were not sought or not received.

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APPLICANT 2

Name of former partner	Date relationship ended	Date of reference

Information should be provided where the applicant has separated, divorced or dissolved a civil partnership, or where they have set up home with a previous partner. Former partner references or write-ups of interviews with former partners may be included in Section C. Set out any contra-indications arising from former partner checks and how they have been considered/ addressed, or alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report. Give details if any checks were not sought or not received.

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APPLICATIONS TO FOSTER, ADOPT OR CHILD-MIND

Has the applicant previously applied to become a foster carer, adopter or child-minder?	YES/NO
If yes, give details of the date, name and address of the agency/service, type of application and outcome	

Has any member of the household previously applied to become a foster carer, adopter or child-minder?	YES/NO
If yes, give details of the date, name and address of the agency/service, type of application and outcome	

Has the applicant been an approved foster carer in the preceding 12 months? ⁽¹¹⁾	YES/NO
If yes, give the name and address of the fostering service, the date a reference was requested, the date any reference was received, and any further relevant details	

ENHANCED DBS CHECKS (APPLICANTS AND ADULT HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS) ⁽¹²⁾

Name	Date check completed
Give details of any contra-indications arising from Enhanced DBS checks and how these have been considered/ addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.	

**HEALTH ⁽¹³⁾
APPLICANT 1**

Prospective Foster Carer Report (Form F) England

Name of applicant	
Name of General Practitioner	
Name of GP practice	
Name of fostering service medical adviser	
Date of medical adviser report	
Medical adviser comments	
<p style="font-size: 48px; opacity: 0.2; transform: rotate(-30deg);">SAMPLE</p>	
Give details of any contra-indications arising from the applicant's health and how these have been considered/addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.	

Name of applicant	
Name of General Practitioner	
SAMPLE	

APPLICANT 2

Name of applicant	
Name of General Practitioner	
Name of GP practice	
Name of fostering service medical adviser	
Date of medical adviser report	
Medical adviser comments	

Name of applicant	
Name of General Practitioner	
Give details of any contra-indications arising from the applicant's health and how these have been considered/addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.	

HOME LOCAL AUTHORITY CHECK ⁽¹⁴⁾

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Name of home local authority	
Date of residence in this local authority	
Name of referee and status	
Date check completed	
Give details of any contra-indications arising from the local authority checks and how these have been considered/addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.	

HOUSEHOLD ACCOMMODATION ⁽¹⁵⁾

Describe the home including the number of bedrooms, proposed sleeping arrangements, play and garden space	
Briefly describe the neighbourhood, community and access to key services	
Date of home safety assessment (checklist may be included in Section C) ⁽¹⁶⁾	
Provide details of any outstanding home safety issues	

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PERSONAL REFERENCES (REQUIRED) ⁽¹⁷⁾

	Referee 1	Referee 2
Name		
Address		
Relationship to applicants/s		
Number of years known		
Date interviewed		
Written reports of these interviews should be included in Section C		

PERSONAL REFERENCES (OPTIONAL)

	Referee 3	Referee 4
Name		
Address		
Relationship to applicants/s		
Number of years known		
Date interviewed		
Written reports should be included in Section C (if undertaken)		

	Referee 5	Referee 6
Name		

Address		
Relationship to applicants/s		
Number of years known		
Date interviewed		
Written reports should be included in Section C (if undertaken)		

Date when all of the Stage 1 information was received	
Section A (Part 1) contains all the information required to complete Stage 1 of the fostering assessment. If a decision is made not to proceed to Stage 2, the fostering service may wish to use the BAAF Stage 1 Decision Sheet (Fostering). This decision must be made within 10 days of receiving all the Stage 1 information.	

SAMPLE

SECTION A (PART 2)

VERIFICATION OF DOCUMENTS ⁽¹⁸⁾

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Date birth certificate seen		
Date passport or other certification of nationality seen		
Date driving licence seen		
National Insurance number and date seen		
If the applicants are married to each other or have registered a civil partnership, date certificate seen		
If the applicant(s) are divorced/ have terminated a civil partnership, date certificate(s) seen		

PREVIOUS LOCAL AUTHORITY CHECKS ⁽¹⁹⁾

Name of local authority	Dates resident in this local authority	Date check Completed	Name of local authority person and status
Give details of any contra-indications arising from the local authority checks and how these have been considered/ addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.			

COURT PROCEEDINGS

Has the applicant been involved in any family court proceedings or in any proceedings about children and/or family?	YES/NO
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If yes, give details including the date, name of court, type of order made and the names of the children concerned. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.

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EMPLOYMENT OR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY ⁽²⁰⁾

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Current employment or voluntary activity (if any)		
Name of current employer/organisation		
Current hours of work		
Any planned changes to hours of work		
Date reference was completed		
<p>Employer and voluntary activity references should be included in Section C. Give details of any contra-indications arising from this reference and how these have been considered/ addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.</p>		

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT OR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITY INVOLVING CHILDREN OR VULNERABLE ADULTS ⁽²¹⁾

APPLICANT 1

Name of employer or organisation	Dates employed	Date of any completed reference
<p>Previous employer or voluntary activity references may be included in Section C. Give details if any checks were not sought or not received. Give details of any contra-indications arising from these references and how these have been considered/addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; opacity: 0.2;">SAMPLE</p>		

APPLICANT 2

Name of employer or organisation	Dates employed	Date of any completed reference
<p>Previous employer or voluntary activity references may be included in Section C. Give details if any checks were not sought or not received. Give details of any contra-indications arising from these references and how these have been considered/addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.</p>		

HOUSEHOLD FINANCE ⁽²²⁾

Has a financial statement/assessment form been completed? (If yes, this may be included in Section C)	YES/NO
Provide details of the applicant(s) income and expenditure. Describe how this has been verified and note any implications for fostering.	

PETS AND ANIMALS ⁽²³⁾

Has a pet questionnaire or checklist been completed? (If yes, this may be included in Section C.)	YES/NO
Provide brief details of any pets or animals in the household including species, number and age. Describe the relevance of the pets or animals in relation to fostering. Cross reference to section C as appropriate, or to the relevant section in the assessment report.	

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET CHECK ⁽²⁴⁾

Has a check been made of social media websites or using internet search engines?	YES/NO
If yes, provide details, including any contra-indications arising from these checks, and how these have been considered/addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.	

SCHOOL, NURSERY, AND HEALTH VISITOR CHECKS ⁽²⁵⁾

Subject of check	Name of school or nursery	Name of referee and status	Date check completed
School, nursery and health visitor checks may be included in Section C. Give details if any checks were not sought or not received. Give details of any contra-indications arising from these checks and how these have been considered/ addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.			

OTHER CHECKS ⁽²⁶⁾

Subject of check	Type of check	Date check completed

Give details if any checks were not received. Give details of any contra- indications arising from these checks and how these have been considered/addressed. Alternatively, note briefly and cross-reference to the relevant section in the assessment report.		

SAMPLE

SECTION B

About the applicant(s)

1. Family background and childhood (including education)

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Analysis:

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2. Adult life (including employment and previous relationships)

--

Analysis:

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3. Personality and current relationship

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Analysis:

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4. Household members (including children) and lifestyle

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Analysis:

--

5. Other children (including adults) and social/ support network

--

Analysis:

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Assessment of fostering capacity

6. Caring for children: providing warmth, empathy and encouragement

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Analysis:

--

7. Caring for children: providing structure and boundaries

--

Analysis:

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8. Caring for children: providing durability, resilience and commitment

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Analysis:

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9. Working effectively with professionals and birth family

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Analysis:

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10. Understanding identity and diversity

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Analysis:

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Preparing to foster

11. Motivation, timing of application, and anticipated impact of fostering

--

Analysis:

--

12. Understanding of safer caring

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Analysis:

--

13. Preparation, training completed, and future development needs

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Analysis:

SAMPLE

SECTION C

Supporting information

REFERENCES

Item	Attached	If yes, provide names	Applicant has seen references
Personal references	YES/NO		YES/NO
Household member references	YES/NO		YES/NO
Former partner references	YES/NO		YES/NO
Employer references	YES/NO		YES/NO
Previous employer references	YES/NO		YES/NO
School, nursery, health visitor references	YES/NO		YES/NO

OTHER MATERIAL

Item	Attached	Notes or comments
Family tree ⁽¹⁾	YES/NO	
Ecomap ⁽²⁾	YES/NO	
Chronology ⁽³⁾	YES/NO	
Home safety checklist	YES/NO	
Financial statement/assessment form	YES/NO	
Dog/pet checklist	YES/NO	
Safer caring plan	YES/NO	
Preparation training record ⁽⁴⁾	YES/NO	
Second opinion visit ⁽⁵⁾	YES/NO	

Other information	YES/NO	
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SAMPLE

SECTION D

Specialist reports

Parent and child report	YES/NO
Permanent fostering report	YES/NO
Other reports	YES/NO
<i>If yes please specify:</i>	

SAMPLE

SECTION E

Summary and recommendation

TIMESCALES ⁽¹⁾

Date of application	
Date assessment completed	
Any comments about duration of assessment	

SUMMARY ⁽²⁾

Summary of key factors leading to the recommendation (to include strengths, vulnerabilities and concerns)

Summary of key factors leading to the recommendation (to include strengths, vulnerabilities and concerns)

SAMPLE

RECOMMENDATION ⁽³⁾

This recommendation should include details of the terms of approval (type of fostering and the number and age range of children to be placed)



Name of social worker completing the report	
Signature of social worker completing the report	
Date	
Name of team manager responsible for the report	
Signature of team manager responsible for the report	
Date	

SAMPLE

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The applicant(s) observations on the report

Name of applicant(s)	
I/We have received the report on the following date:	
<p>I/We have read the report prepared on my/our suitability to foster (understanding that any confidential third party information in section C may have been withheld). I/We certify that, to the best of our/my knowledge and belief, the factual information contained in this report is accurate and I/we have indicated in the box below any factual corrections that need to be made. I/We understand that if any of this information is found to be false or misleading, this may result in the fostering service rejecting my/our application. I/We understand that it is important not to withhold any information about factors that may influence our/my capacity to care for a child.</p>	
I/We have the following factual corrections/observations/additional comments on the report:	
<p style="text-align: center; opacity: 0.5; font-size: 48px; font-weight: bold;">SAMPLE</p>	
<p>The fostering service has given me/us their privacy notice that explains how my/our personal data will be kept and shared. I/We understand that any information supplied will form part of the fostering service's case record in respect of my/our application. I/We understand that this form is the property of the fostering service to which I/we have applied. I/We agree not to copy this document (other than for my/our own personal records) or disclose its contents in full or in part, to any other person, fostering service or authority without the fostering service's permission.</p>	
Signature	
Date	

Signature	
Date	

SAMPLE

APPLICATION FORM

Name of fostering service

BASIC DETAILS

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Family name		
Forenames		
Previous name(s)		
Other “known by” names		
Gender		
Sexual orientation		
Date of birth		
Age		
Place of birth		
Nationality		
Ethnicity		
Religion or faith group		
Practising or non-practising		
Primary language in the home		
Other language(s) spoken in the home		
Do you identify as disabled?		
Do you identify as trans?		
Email address		
Telephone number		

Mobile number		
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ADDRESS

Address	
Length of time at this address	
Name of home local authority	

HEALTH

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Name of General Practitioner		
Address of GP practice		
Telephone number		
Email address		

EMPLOYMENT OR OCCUPATION

	Applicant 1	Applicant 2
Current employment or occupation (if any)		

Name of current employer/organisation		
Current hours of work		
Any planned changes to hours of work		

CHILDREN UNDER 18 LIVING IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

ADULTS LIVING IN THE HOUSEHOLD

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

HOUSEHOLD ACCOMMODATION

Briefly describe the home including the number of bedrooms, and proposed sleeping arrangements

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CHILDREN (UNDER 18) FROM A CURRENT OR PREVIOUS PARTNERSHIP LIVING ELSEWHERE

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

ADULT CHILDREN LIVING ELSEWHERE

Family name	Forename/s	Gender	Date of birth	Age	Relationship to applicant(s)

COURT PROCEEDINGS

Have you been involved in any family court proceedings or in any proceedings about children and/or family?	YES/NO
If yes, give details including the date, name of court, type of order made and the names of the children concerned	

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APPLICATIONS TO FOSTER, ADOPT OR CHILD-MIND

Have you previously applied to become a foster carer, adopter or child-minder?	YES/NO
If yes, give details of the date, name and address of the agency/service, type of application and outcome	

Has any member of your household previously applied to become a foster carer, adopter or child-minder?	YES/NO
If yes, give details of the date, name and address of the agency/service, type of application and outcome	

Have you been an approved foster carer in the preceding 12 months?	YES/NO
If yes, give the name and address of the fostering service	

PERSONAL REFERENCES

	Referee 1	Referee 2
Name		

Address		
Telephone number		
Email address		
Relationship to you		
Number of years known		

	Referee 3	Referee 4
Name		
Address		
Telephone number		
Email address		
Relationship to you		
Number of years known		

	Referee 5	Referee 6
Name		
Address		
Telephone number		
Email address		
Relationship to you		
Number of years known		

APPLICANT DECLARATION

Applicant(s) declaration	
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I/we undertake to be truthful and honest in providing full and accurate information for this assessment, both verbally and in writing. I/we understand that the fostering service may seek verification of any information that I/we have supplied or will supply, and that if any of this information is found to be false or misleading, this may result in the fostering service deciding not to proceed with my/our application. I/we understand that the fostering service will be taking up a series of checks and references and will be seeking our consent to do this. I/we understand that if we are not willing to consent to these checks and references being undertaken the fostering service may decide not to progress with my/our application. The fostering service has given me/us their privacy notice that explains how my/our personal data will be kept and shared.

Signature (Applicant 1)	
Date	
Signature (Applicant 2)	
Date	

ASSESSMENT AGREEMENT

This document should be completed at the outset of the assessment and updated as necessary using the Assessment Agreement Update Sheet (below).

Name of applicant(s)	
Name of fostering service	

Applicant(s) declaration

- I/we undertake to be truthful and honest in providing full and accurate information for this assessment, both verbally and in writing. I/we understand that the fostering service may seek verification of any information that I/we have supplied or will supply, and that if any of this information is found to be false or misleading, this may result in the fostering service deciding not to proceed with my/our application.
- The fostering service has given me/us their privacy notice that explains how my/our personal data will be kept and shared.
- If I/we am unsure about whether to share any information, I/we undertake to discuss this with my/our assessing worker.
- I/we agree to work in partnership with my/our assessing worker, to prioritise meetings and come prepared with agreed tasks completed. I/we will attempt to minimise the need to cancel any planned visits.
- I/we understand that if at any time I/we need to slow down the assessment process, or take a break from the assessment, I/we will discuss this with my/our assessing worker.

Fostering service declaration

- In accordance with Fostering Services National Minimum Standards, we undertake to treat applicants fairly, without prejudice, openly and with respect.
- We agree to work in partnership with applicants, to prioritise agreed meetings and come prepared with agreed tasks completed. We will attempt to minimise the need to cancel any planned visits.
- We undertake to discuss any concerns or issues that may emerge during the assessment, and will share information as fully as possible, subject to compliance with data protection principles in relation to third party information.
- We undertake to keep applicants informed about any unavoidable delays in the assessment process, and endeavour to minimise the length of such delays.
- If the assessing worker leaves the fostering service at short notice, or is on extended sickness leave, we will discuss and agree a satisfactory solution with applicants to the best of our ability.
- We will provide applicants with details of how to contact the assessor's team manager in the event that they have concerns that cannot be resolved with the assessor directly.
- We will provide information about the fostering services complaints procedure, and information about making representations to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) as appropriate.
- To comply with the General Data Protection Regulation 2018/Data Protection Act 2018, we have given the applicant(s) a copy of our privacy notice.

Arrangements (including dates and venue) for preparation training

Assessment visits

Applicants must consent in writing before checks and references are progressed, and CoramBAAF publishes a form that can be used for this purpose. In the box below, the assessor should make explicit those people who will be contacted, especially where there is some discretion, and where individuals are personally known to the applicants, such as adult children, previous partners, current employers, previous employers, and schools, nurseries or health visitors involved with the applicants own children. Applicants should be informed that social media checks will be undertaken and that should be recorded in this section.

SAMPLE

Provisional date for completion of the report	
Provisional date for fostering panel	

Fostering National Minimum Standards expect an assessment to be completed and presented to the fostering panel within eight months of the initial application to foster. However, in some cases the assessment might take longer than this, and so these provisional dates may need to change. It may also be necessary for a second opinion visit, by another social worker or team manager following completion of the report.

Subsequent (reserve) panel dates	
-----------------------------------------	--

Addressing difficulties

If the applicants are unhappy with the assessment agreement, or feel that the assessing social worker is not keeping to the agreement, then in the first instance they should discuss this with the assessing social worker. If the matter is not resolved or they feel unable to do this, then the applicants should contact the assessor's team manager.

Name of team manager	
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Email address	
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Telephone	
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Any other agreements

Applicant 1	
Signature	
Date	
Applicant 2	
Signature	
Date	

Name of social worker	
Email address	
Telephone	
Signature	
Date	

ASSESSMENT AGREEMENT UPDATE SHEET

Update to agreement

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Applicant 1	
Signature	
Date	
Applicant 2	
Signature	
Date	

Assessing social worker	
Signature	
Date	

SAMPLE

STAGE 1 DECISION FORM

Name of applicant(s)	
-----------------------------	--

Social worker recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The above applicant(s) should progress to Stage 2 of the assessment, OR • The above applicant(s) should not progress to Stage 2 of the assessment <p><i>(delete as appropriate)</i></p>

Social worker comments

Name of social worker	
Signature	
Date	

Team manager decision/recommendation (delete as appropriate)*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The above applicant(s) should progress to Stage 2 of the assessment, OR • The above applicant(s) should not progress to Stage 2 of the assessment <p><i>(delete as appropriate)</i></p>

Team manager comments

--

Name of team manager	
Signature	
Date	

* Note: Where it is recommended that an applicant(s) does not progress to Stage 2 of the assessment, this decision must be taken by the fostering service decision-maker, who must inform the applicant(s) of the reasons in writing.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

PREPARATION TRAINING RECORD

Name of applicant	
--------------------------	--

Details of attendance at preparation training groups

Content of preparation training

Trainer's observations on the applicant's learning, participation, and any issues that need further consideration

--

Name of trainer	
Signature	
Date	

SAMPLE

PARENT AND CHILD REPORT

Name of applicant(s)

What is the applicant(s) motivation to do parent and child fostering? What do they feel will be the rewards for them?

What is the applicant(s) understanding of what this kind of placement involves, and how will this impact on all family members?

Is the accommodation suitable for parent and child fostering, and how will the applicant(s) manage another adult living in their home?

Could the applicant(s) be available to provide an appropriate level of supervision to ensure the safety of the child at all times?

Could the applicant(s) accept “good enough” parenting, and will they be comfortable allowing the parent to be the primary carer?

[Empty box for text input]

Do the applicant(s) have good child protection awareness, including up to date training, and the confidence to intervene where necessary?

[Empty box for text input]

Could the applicant(s) work closely and sensitively with birth parents in this context, including providing support and sharing any concerns?

Do the applicant(s) have the ability to provide objective, evidence-based written records, and give evidence in court about these if necessary?

What specific parent and child training or preparation has been provided for the applicant(s)?

[Empty rectangular box for content]

Summary

SAMPLE

Large empty rectangular box for the main report content, overlaid with a large, light grey 'SAMPLE' watermark.

Name of social worker	
Signature of social worker	
Date	

PERMANENT FOSTERING REPORT

Name of applicant(s)

What is the applicant(s) understanding of the term “permanence” and what is their motivation to offer a child a “forever home”?

How do the applicant(s) feel about the child living with them into adulthood in the same way that many birth children do? What is the expectation after they have left home?

How would the applicant(s) be affected if fostering allowances ceased to be available because of the young adult's age? What thought has been given to including the child in wills or contributing to wedding costs and the like?

How will permanent fostering impact on, and be experienced by, individual members of the family and extended family?

What age, gender and personality of child would likely fit best with the applicant(s) and their family? How will this fit with any future life plans?

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Summary

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Name of social worker	
Signature of social worker	
Date	

SECOND OPINION REPORT

Name of prospective foster carer(s)	
Date of second opinion visit	

Reasons for undertaking a second opinion visit

Key areas discussed during visit (including analysis)

Recommendation regarding suitability to foster (including terms of approval)

Name of person completing report	
Status/position in fostering service	
Signature	
Date	

SAMPLE

PANEL MEMBER NOTES

Name of applicant(s)	
Name of social worker	
Panel date	

Purpose of presentation to panel

Summary of strengths of application

Suggested questions and issues for discussion

--

Name of panel member	
Signature	
Date	

STAGE 2 DECISION FORM

Name of applicant(s)	
Date	
Name of decision maker	
In making this decision, I have taken into account the following material:	
Form F/PAR and panel minutes	YES/NO
Other material <i>If yes, please list:</i>	YES/NO

Key considerations/arguments in this case:

<p>I agree with the process and approach of the assessment (including panel process), am satisfied as to its fairness, and satisfied that the arguments have been properly addressed:</p>	<p>YES/NO</p>
<p><i>If no, provide details:</i></p>	

<p>Recommendation of panel</p>
<p><i>This can be taken directly from panel minutes</i></p>

<p>Reasons given for this recommendation</p>
<p><i>These can be taken directly from panel minutes</i></p>

<p>I have considered additional material that was not available at panel</p>	<p>YES/NO</p>
<p><i>If yes, provide details of this information and how this has had an impact on the</i></p>	

decision:

Decision

Reasons for decision

Please state the reasons you have adopted, by cross reference or otherwise, and any further reasons for your decision:

Advice to fostering service

Signed by decision maker	Date

SAMPLE