

# Brighton & Hove Fostering & Adoption Service

**Practice notes on checks and references required for the assessment of adopters, fosterers for adoption, concurrency carers, Brighton and Hove and Barnardo's foster carers, and family and friends foster carers.**

**March 2016 update**

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**Introduction** It is a statutory requirement, detailed in both the Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005 and the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, and the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review and Fostering Services (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2013, that all carers must be subject to a statutory minimum number of checks and references. It is Brighton and Hove **policy** to set higher standards in some areas, so any variations to the policies which are detailed below must be agreed at Head of Service level. It is **not possible** for the adoption panel or the fostering panel to consider recommending approval of applicants unless a statutory minimum full set of checks and references have been satisfactorily completed, which **must** take account of the person's history from birth. An unbroken chronology detailing every year of the applicant's life must be presented in all cases. The statutory minimum of two personal referees **must** have been visited at their homes. All documents presented to the panels should be typed. If important hand-written documents are produced by any party, an original or scanned version should be presented to panel. The point of references and checks is that they should support the assessment of carers in helping us form a judgement about the suitability of their personality and background to be a carer for a vulnerable child.

**The introduction of a two-stage assessment process for both adopters and foster carers means that the information listed below must be gathered as part of stage 1 of the process. See separate guidance for details of the 2 stages of assessment for carers.**

## 1. Adoption

**Introduction:** These standards apply to stranger adopters, foster carers who are adopting, relatives who are adopting, and concurrency carers who are approved both as foster carers and adopters. See separate note on Fostering to Adopt. Also, see

## Basic Requirements

- **Enhanced DBS for each person over 16 in the household but excluding looked after young people**
- **CPR check on all applicants, and adult household members**
- **Full medical on each applicant**
- **Six personal references for couples and three for single carers, and others as required (local policy)**
- **Health and safety check**
- **For other checks and references and essential information you **MUST** read the guidance below**

**DBS** An 'enhanced DBS with children and adults barred list' check must be carried out on every adult and young person in the applicants' household over the age of 16, but excluding looked after young people, and on any other adult who will have significant unsupervised care of a child in care on a regular basis. There is no exemption for family members over 16 with learning disabilities. This check is valid indefinitely but it is Brighton and Hove **policy** to repeat it every two years. If a new DBS check has not been applied for within the 2 year period, the Head of Service must give their consent for the policy to be varied so that the existing DBS check can be used until a new one has been received. It is only portable if the applicant has arranged for it to be so at the time of the DBS check being requested. The check will only be returned to the applicant, not to the local authority, so you **must** request the applicant to notify you immediately they receive the DBS check, in view of the very tight assessment timescales. Applicants with a child in placement must be covered by a valid DBS check until an adoption order is made. If applicants have lived overseas for a period you should refer to the website 'Criminal records checks for overseas applicants' for guidance on how to get an appropriate certificate from the overseas police authorities regarding any criminal record. This check is a requirement in Brighton and Hove. If any DBS checks come back with offences or cautions showing, a report in a standard format must be sent to the Adoption Team

Manager seeking written approval to continue with the assessment. If the offences or cautions have been shared by the applicants at the outset, this is helpful. If undisclosed offences or cautions appear on a DBS check, this must be taken as a warning that the applicants have not been fully honest with the assessing social worker, and must be fully explored with the applicants. Any 'soft' information disclosed by the DBS or local police must be explored in the assessment. Transgendered applicants who do not wish to reveal details of their previous identity can approach the DBS sensitive applications team for advice. An unwillingness to discuss this aspect of their past is likely to be seen as a disqualifier for adoption.

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**CPR** CPR checks must be carried out on all adult members of the applicants' household. The CPR check incorporates a local authority check which is organised by the administrator for child protection enquiries. It is a requirement that the local authority check covers the previous 10 years so if the applicants have lived outside Brighton & Hove within the last 10 years the child protection administrator will make contact with the relevant local authority and report on the result of that enquiry as part of the child protection register check. This check is valid for **3 years**.

**Medicals** Full medical checks must have been carried out on all prospective adopters before they can be approved. These should take place at least eight weeks before panel so that the Medical Advisor has time to collate information, write her report and arrange for any follow up work to be done before panel. Medicals must be renewed every **2 years**. At the point of matching the medical must be in date and kept up to date until the adoption order. If there are any significant changes to the applicants' health at any stage a review medical must be requested.

**References** For all **couples**, three written personal references must be requested and received for each applicant. Applicants may be asked to nominate a replacement if necessary if any referee or reference proves unsuitable. Couples will be asked to nominate three referees each to ensure there is a span of referees who are able to comment on the applicants individually as well as the applicants as a couple, and it will be important to ensure that referees include people who have some longstanding knowledge of the applicant/s, so that they can also comment on previous relationships and most of their life events. Of these six, no more than one per applicant can be a family member. A minimum of three should be interviewed including one family member and it is important to consider carefully who will be interviewed to ensure the referees can comment on both applicants. For **single**

**carers**, three references must be requested and all must be interviewed. The interviews should be written up and presented to panel with the letters of reference provided by the referees (which may be in letter or e-mail form). The assessing social worker should send a copy of the write up of the visit to the referee to ask them to confirm that it is an accurate account of the meeting. The written account of the visit can be signed by the referee or an email confirmation appended to the report of the visit. A scanned version of any handwritten references must also be presented to panel. Applicants should be advised not to nominate referees where there could be a potential conflict of interest i.e. people who are employed or managed by the applicant, or clients of the applicant in terms of their professional role.

#### **Other references;**

- **Reference from previous partner**

Any previous partners with whom child raising has been shared **must** be asked for a written reference and should be interviewed, unless there are compelling arguments against this which can be corroborated by an external source such as through another referee or through a solicitor's letter or court judgement e.g. if there has been domestic violence which could place an applicant at risk. Every effort must be made to find them if the applicant no longer has their address. Where a divorce or termination of civil partnership has taken place a certified document showing the grounds for divorce/termination must be seen. A decision not to take up any particular reference must be agreed in discussion between the social worker and their practice manager, and the reasons recorded. Should a plan be made to proceed with the assessment without this interview being achieved, the decision must be agreed in writing by the Head of Service.

- **Reference from adult children of previous or existing relationship including adult children of previous partner that applicant involved in caring for.**

Any children (minors or adult) of previous relationships should be considered for interview, and their views incorporated into the report.

- **Reference from employer or previous employer**

References must be sought from any employer or previous employer of either applicant if this employment has involved working with children or vulnerable adults over the last ten years. An employer reference seeking confirmation of employment status will always be sought for employed applicants, and should always ask for any issues of a disciplinary or health nature, although employers will sometimes be reluctant to share this sort of information. Self-employed applicants must get a letter of reference from their accountant verifying the nature

of their employment and the level of their income from it, covering at least the previous financial year.

- **Reference from school, nursery or health visitor**

Where applicants have pre-school children, the health visitor should always be asked for a reference. For applicants with school-aged children, the school should be asked for a report on their view about how the child is doing at school, the school's relationship with the applicants and what the school considers might be the impact on the child of an adoptive sibling joining the family.

- **Other family members or friends**

Other family members or friends may be approached if it is felt they have significant comments to make, or if they are needed to ensure that the references cover a broad span of the life of the applicants and if they are a couple are able to comment on their relationship together.

## **Checks**

Other mandatory checks for all applicants include seeing and noting details of original

- birth certificates & passports & NI numbers
- marriage and decree absolute certificates, civil partnership and termination of civil partnership certificates
- evidence that each applicant has a right of residence/is domiciled in the UK (if appropriate – legal advice may be needed)
- verification of household finances to include all income, expenditure, assets and debts.
- health and safety checks using the Brighton & Hove Health & Safety Form. Hazardous plants must be identified and where possible removed before a child is placed.
- checks on pets must also be completed and updated where necessary to ensure they are valid up to the point of an adoption order being made. Potentially dangerous pets, including all dogs, venomous snakes, and so on, must be thoroughly considered before a child is placed. A specialist dog assessment must be carried out where the number of dogs, or the behaviour or size of a dog presents a potential risk.

## **2. Fostering**

**Introduction:** These requirements are similar in most ways to the requirements for prospective adopters. These apply to all new stranger foster carers, including all Barnardo's Link Plus carers, and including concurrency carers who are being approved as foster carers, and to all family and friends carers who are being presented for full approval. (Requirements for temporary foster carer approval of family and friends carers who have taken children under Regulation 24/25 arrangements, and who are being presented to the fostering panel for interim or full approval as foster carers for Brighton and Hove are different, and are detailed below in section 3).

There is a slight variation for transfer assessments of foster carers, which was introduced in June 2014 – see separate guidance which must be read in conjunction with the guidance below.

Prospective adoptive carers who are being approved as temporary foster carers for a limited approval period, "Fostering to Adopt", will already have all the necessary checks and references in place. All that is required is an additional assessment to demonstrate that the carers understand the additional functions and responsibilities involved in being a foster carer.

### **Basic Requirements**

- **Enhanced DBS for each person over 16 in the household but excluding looked after young people**
- **CPR check on all applicants, and adult household members**
- **Full medical on each applicant**
- **Six personal references for all couples and three for single carers, and others as required (local policy)**
- **Health and safety check**
- **For other checks and references and essential information you **MUST** read the guidance below**

**DBS** An 'enhanced DBS with children and adults barred list' check must be carried out on every adult and young person in the applicants' household over the age of 16, but excluding looked after young people, and on any other adult who will have significant unsupervised care of a child in care on a regular basis. There is no exemption for family members over 16 with learning disabilities. This check is valid indefinitely but Brighton and Hove **policy** is to renew it every three years. If a new DBS check has not been applied for within the 3 year period above, then the Head of Service must give their agreement to the existing DBS check continuing to be used until a new one has been received. It is only portable if the applicant has arranged at the time of application for it to be so. This check will only be returned to the applicant, not to the local authority, so you **must** request the applicant to notify you immediately they receive the DBS check, in view of the very tight assessment timescales. If applicants have lived overseas for a continuous period exceeding 6 months, you should refer to the website 'Criminal records checks for overseas applicants' for guidance on how to get an appropriate certificate from the overseas police authorities regarding any criminal record. This is a requirement in Brighton and Hove. If any DBS checks come back with offences or cautions showing, a report in a standard format must be sent to the Fostering Team Manager seeking written approval to continue with the assessment. If the offences or cautions have been shared by the applicants at the outset, this is helpful. If undisclosed offences or cautions appear on a DBS check this must be taken as a warning that the applicants have not been fully honest with the assessing social worker, and must be fully explored with the applicants. Any 'soft' information disclosed by the DBS or local police must be explored in the assessment. Transgendered applicants who do not wish to reveal details of their previous identity can approach the DBS sensitive applications team for advice. An unwillingness to discuss this aspect of their past is likely to be seen as a disqualifier for fostering.

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**CPR** CPR checks must be carried out on all members of the applicants' household, and on all ex-looked after children, and parents over 16 in parent and baby placements. The CPR check incorporates a local authority check which is organised by the administrator for child protection enquiries. It is a requirement that the local authority check covers the previous 10 years so if the applicants have lived outside Brighton & Hove within the last 10 years the child protection administrator will make contact with the relevant local authority and report on the result of that enquiry as part of the child protection register check. This check is valid for **3 years**.

**Medicals** Full medical checks must have been carried out on all foster carers before they can be approved. These should take place at least eight weeks before panel so that the Medical Advisor has time to collate information, write her report and arrange for any follow up work to be done before panel. Medical updates must be completed every **3 years**, and any medical issues should be addressed as they arise, or at the annual review of the carers, as appropriate. If a carer's health deteriorates significantly it is necessary to ask for a new **full** medical, rather than an update, to be carried out.

**References** Three written personal references must be requested and received for each applicant. Applicants may be asked to nominate a replacement if necessary if any referee proves unsuitable. **Couples** will be asked to nominate 3 referees each to ensure that there is a span of referees who are able to comment on the applicants individually as well as the applicants as a couple, and it will be important to ensure that referees include people who have some longstanding knowledge of the applicant/s, so that they can comment on previous relationships and most of their life events. Of these six, no more than one per applicant can be a family member. A minimum of three should be interviewed including one family member. For **single** carers three references must be provided and all must be interviewed. It is important to consider carefully who will be interviewed to ensure the referees can comment on both applicants. The interviews should be written up and presented to panel with the letters of reference provided by the referees (which may be in letter or e-mail form). The assessing social worker should send a copy of the write up of the visit to the referee to ask them to confirm that it is an accurate account of the meeting. The written account of the visit can be signed by the referee or an email confirmation appended to the report of the visit. A scanned version of any handwritten references must also be presented to panel. Applicants should be advised not to nominate referees where there could be a potential conflict of interest i.e. people who are employed or managed by the applicant, or clients of the applicant in terms of their professional role.

**Other references;**

- **Reference from previous partner**

Any previous partners with whom child raising has been shared must be asked for a written reference and should be interviewed, unless there are compelling arguments against this which can be corroborated by an external source such as through another referee or a solicitor's letter or court judgement e.g. if there has



been domestic violence which could place an applicant at risk. Every effort must be made to find them if the applicant no longer has their address. Where a divorce or termination of a civil partnership has taken place a certified document showing the grounds for divorce/termination must be seen. A decision not to take up any particular reference must be agreed in discussion between the social worker and their practice manager, and the reasons recorded. Should a plan be made to proceed with the assessment without this interview being achieved, the decision must be agreed in writing by the Head of Service.

- **Reference from adult children of previous or existing relationship including adult children of previous partner that applicant involved in caring for.**

Any children (minors or adult) of previous relationships should be considered for interview, and their views incorporated into the report.

- **Reference from employer or previous employer**

References must be sought from any employer or previous employer of either applicant if this employment has involved working with children or vulnerable adults over the last ten years. An employer reference seeking confirmation of employment status will always be sought for employed applicants, and should always ask for any issues of a disciplinary or health nature, although employers will sometimes be reluctant to share this sort of information. Self-employed applicants must get a letter of reference from their accountant verifying the nature of their employment and the level of their income from it, covering at least the previous financial year.

- **Reference from school, nursery or health visitor**

Where applicants have pre-school children, the health visitor should always be asked for a reference. For applicants with school-aged children, the school should be asked for a report on their view about how the child is doing at school, the school's relationship with the applicants and what the school considers might be the impact on the child of fostering.

- **Other family members or friends**

Other family members or friends may be approached if it is felt they have significant comments to make, or if they are needed to ensure that the references cover a broad span of the life of the applicants and if they are a couple are able to comment on their relationship together.

## **Checks**

Other mandatory checks for all applicants include seeing and noting details of

- birth certificates & passports & NI numbers
- marriage and decree absolute certificates, civil partnership and termination of civil partnership certificates
- evidence that each applicant has a right of residence/is domiciled in the UK (if appropriate – legal advice may be needed)
- verification of household finances to include all income, expenditure, assets and debts.
- Health and safety checks using the updated Brighton & Hove form. Hazardous plants must also be identified and where possible removed before a child is placed.
- checks on pets must also be completed and be updated when necessary so that they are valid at all times. Potentially dangerous pets, including all dogs, venomous snakes, and so on, must be thoroughly considered before a child is placed. A specialist assessment must be carried out on any dogs where their size or number might present a risk to children.

## **Transfer Assessments**

- Where foster carers are already approved by another Fostering Service Provider (Agency), and they wish to be approved by Brighton and Hove, the following provisions apply.
- They cannot be approved by both Agencies at the same time.
- The other Agency must be approached in writing and a request made for them to share the complete foster carer file with us within the statutory timescale ie 10 working days. In practice this should mean that they send us their paper file or a complete bundle of their electronic records. It is likely that we will need to go to their office to read the file.
- We will need to initiate new Enhanced DBS checks, and if either applicant has lived overseas for a continuous period of more than 6 months, the 'criminal records checks for overseas applicants' website must be consulted for information that will enable a certificate of good conduct to be secured from the applicable country/countries. This is a Brighton and Hove requirement.

- A new CPR check will be done on each applicant.
- We will need updated medicals. If any significant health issues are brought to our attention, a full medical should be carried out on each applicant.
- The other Agency should be asked for a written reference on the applicants. It is a requirement that they provide this. Regulations state that we can then use our discretion about whether we need to take up other personal references, however we have made a good-practice decision that we will take up two fresh references (existing referees may be approached) for all transfer assessments. These referees must each provide a written reference and must be interviewed in person. Where an applicant has shared child-care with a past partner, attempts must always be made to interview that partner, or any of the children who were jointly cared for. If it is planned to go ahead with an assessment without those interviews being completed, this can **only** be done with the written agreement of the Head of Service.
- Other references can be taken up as appropriate, and the checks listed above should all be re-done eg H&S, pets, and so on – see details in Fostering above.
- A full chronology must be done for all applicants.
- Where there are any gaps in the assessment, a decision must be made by the Fostering Team Manager about whether it is preferable to complete a new BAAF Form F.

### 3. Family and Friends Interim Approvals

**Introduction:** When a temporary ‘connected person’ approval is sought following a family and friends Regulation 24 placement, the following requirements exist.

#### **Basic requirements that must have been completed -**

##### **BEFORE PLACEMENT**

- **CPR check (which incorporates a Local Authority check) on all adult household members under all names and addresses used over past 10 years**

- **PNC checks on all adults over 16 in the household under all names and addresses used over past 10 years**
- **Telephone medical check with the GP for each of the carers. (A full medical on each applicant must have been completed before the carers can be approved).**
- **Verbal references must have been taken up with two referees, one of whom must not be a family member (either by blood or marriage or civil partnership), who will subsequently be asked for written references, and who will be interviewed as part of the process of full assessment.**
- **Home visit to check that the accommodation is suitable for the child being placed. Potentially dangerous pets or other hazards in the house must be assessed before the child is placed.**
- **A record of the Service Manager decision (and its date) to place the child and reasons for agreeing temporary approval of these carers and this particular placement in preference to any other**
- **Enhanced DBS application forms must be completed for all adults over 16 in the household, excluding any looked after young person, and the checks must be returned before a full approval can be granted by Panel**

#### **AFTER PLACEMENT**

**An 'Initial/Viability Assessment – F&F Referral Form' must be completed immediately and sent to the Family and Friends Team before the first annual review, at 4 weeks, if the placement is to continue. A full assessment must be presented to the Panel within 16 weeks, for full approval. If the report is still incomplete after 16 weeks, a brief report (Regulation 25 request) must be presented to the Panel. In exceptional circumstances, an 8-week extension under Regulation 25 may be requested, but a full approval must be sought at the end of that period. If it is not, the**

**temporary approval lapses, and arrangements must be made to move the child to a suitable placement, or regularise the placement in another way eg by discharging the care order or undoing the S20 agreement.**

**The following checks must have been completed as part of the full assessment:**

- **Written personal references from at least three referees must be secured, whether for single applicants or couples,(two of whom must be unrelated to the family), and none of whom can be professionals working with the family in any capacity, nor should they be working in any inferior role to the applicant where there might be a risk of the referee being influenced or coerced by the applicant. Referee visits must be carried out on all 3, and the reports of those visits must be presented to the Panel with the referee's written reference (which may be provided in letter or e-mail form).**
- **Health and Safety Checklist**

When the carers are presented to panel for full approval as foster carers, the required references and checks must have been completed to the same standard as for all foster carers. This is to ensure that the approval that the panel is being asked to recommend is in full compliance with the Fostering Regulations (although Regulations state that only **2 referees** are required, we currently operate to a higher standard). In the event of non-compliance with full Fostering Regulations the child should be moved to a regulated placement. In the event that Fieldwork considers that the placement should continue unregulated, the Head of Service will immediately need to authorise the continuing placement of the child. A record of this decision will need to detail reasons for agreeing to the child being placed in an unregulated placement, an evaluation of any risks to the child or the carers in taking this course of action, and an assessment of any particular risks to Children and Families and the Local Authority. Unregulated placements in some settings other than foster care for over 16s are subject to separate rules – consult Fostering Agency Adviser).

## 4. Family and Friends Full Approvals

**Introduction:** When full approval of a family and friends foster carer is being requested, not based on an emergency placement, and where the child is not yet in placement, the assessing social worker must refer to the guidelines in the template document 'Family and Friends Full Assessment Format' which details the assessment requirements. Family and friends foster carers should be approved to the same standard as all other foster carers in order to comply with the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011, and the Care Planning, Placements and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010, however the Guidance indicates that we should be prepared to give the family some leeway as they are related. All checks carried out during the assessment process must be kept up to date throughout the duration of the placement. Family and Friends foster carers are subject to the same annual fostering review process as all foster carers.

### Basic Requirements

- **Enhanced DBS for each person over 16 in the household, excluding looked after young people**
- **CPR check (which incorporates Local Authority check) on all adult household members under all names and addresses used over past 10 years**
- **Summary of all social services records held in connection with applicants**
- **Full medical on each applicant**
- **Three personal references (local policy) and others as required.**
- **Health and safety check**

**DBS** An 'enhanced DBS with children and adults barred list' check must be carried out on every adult and young person in the applicants' household over the age of 16, excluding any looked after young people, and on any other adult who will have significant unsupervised care of a child in care on a regular basis. There is no exemption for family members over 16, or adults, who have learning disabilities. This check is valid indefinitely although it is Brighton and Hove practice to renew these every three years. If the check has not been renewed within 3 years then the agreement of the Head of Service should be sought to vary policy to continue to use the existing DBS check until a new one has been received. The check will only be returned to the applicant, not to the local authority, so you **must** request the applicant to notify you immediately they receive the DBS check, in view of the very tight assessment timescales. If applicants have lived overseas for a period exceeding 6 months you should refer to the website 'Criminal records checks for overseas applicants' for guidance on how to get an appropriate certificate from the overseas police authorities regarding any criminal record. This is a Brighton and Hove requirement. If any DBS checks come back with offences or cautions showing, a report in a standard format must be sent to the Adoption Team Manager, seeking written approval to continue with the assessment. If the offences or cautions have been shared by the applicants at the outset, this is helpful. If undisclosed offences or cautions appear on a DBS this must be taken as a warning that the applicants have not been fully honest with the assessing social worker, and must be fully explored with the applicants. Any 'soft' information disclosed by the DBS or local police must be explored in the assessment. Transgendered applicants who do not wish to reveal details of their previous identity can approach the DBS sensitive applications team for advice. An unwillingness to discuss this aspect of their past is likely to be seen as a disqualifier for family and friends fostering.

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**CPR** CPR checks must be carried out on all members of the applicants' household. The CPR check incorporates a local authority check which is organised by the administrator for child protection enquiries. It is a requirement that the local authority check covers the previous 10 years so if the applicants have lived outside Brighton & Hove within the last 10 years the child protection administrator will make contact with the relevant local authority and report on the result of that enquiry as part of the child protection register check. This check is valid for **3 years**.

**Medicals** Full medical checks must have been carried out on all foster carers before they can be approved. These should take place at least eight weeks before panel so

that the Medical Advisor has time to collate information, write her report and arrange for any follow up work to be done before panel. Medical updates must be completed every **3 years**, and any medical issues should be addressed as they arise, or at the annual review of the carers, as appropriate. If a carer's health deteriorates significantly it is advisable to ask for a new **full** medical to be carried out.

**References** For **couples**, three written personal references (local policy) should be requested and received for each applicant. Applicants may be asked to nominate a replacement if necessary if any referee or reference proves unsuitable. Of these three, no more than one can be a family member and it will be important to ensure that referees include people who have some longstanding knowledge of the applicant/s, so that they can also comment on previous relationships and most of their life events. For **single** carers, three references are required (local policy), and all must be interviewed. The interviews should be written up and presented to panel with the letters of reference provided by the referees, which may be provided in letter or e-mail form. The assessing social worker should send a copy of the write up of the visit to the referee to ask them to confirm that it is an accurate account of the meeting. The written account of the visit can be signed by the referee or an email confirmation appended to the report of the visit. A scanned version of any handwritten references should also be presented to panel. Applicants should be advised not to nominate referees where there could be a potential conflict of interest i.e. people who are employed or managed by the applicant, or clients of the applicant in terms of their professional role.

**Other references;**

- **Reference from previous partner**

Any previous partners with whom child raising has been shared **must** be asked for a written reference and should be interviewed, unless there are compelling arguments against this which can be corroborated by an external source such as through an additional reference or a solicitor's letter or court judgement e.g. if there has been domestic violence which could place an applicant at risk. Every effort must be made to find them if the applicant no longer has their address. Where a divorce/termination of a civil partnership has taken place a certified document showing the grounds for divorce/termination must be seen. A decision not to take up any particular reference must be agreed in discussion between the social worker and their practice manager, and the reasons recorded. Should a plan be made to proceed with the assessment without this interview being achieved, the decision must be agreed in writing by the Head of Service.



- **Reference from adult children of previous or existing relationship including adult children of previous partner that applicant was involved in caring for.**

Any children (minors or adult) of previous relationships should be considered for interview, and their views incorporated into the report.

- **Reference from employer or previous employer**

References must be sought from any employer or previous employer of either applicant if this employment has involved working with children or vulnerable adults over the last ten years. An employer reference seeking confirmation of employment status will always be sought for employed applicants, and should always ask for any issues of a disciplinary or health nature, although employers will sometimes be reluctant to share this sort of information. Self-employed applicants must get a letter of reference from their accountant verifying the nature of their employment and the level of their income from it, covering at least the previous financial year.

- **Reference from school, nursery or health visitor**

Where applicants have pre-school children, the health visitor should always be asked for a reference. For applicants with school-aged children, the school should be asked for a report on their view about how the child is doing at school, the school's relationship with the applicants and what the school considers might be the impact on the child of fostering.

- **Other family members or friends**

Other family members or friends may be approached if it is felt they have significant comments to make, or if they are needed to ensure that the references cover a broad span of the life of the applicants and if they are a couple are able to comment on their relationship together.

## **Checks**

Other mandatory checks for all applicants include seeing and noting details of

- birth certificates & passports & NI numbers
- marriage and decree absolute certificates, civil partnership and termination of civil partnership certificates
- evidence that each applicant has a right of residence/is domiciled in the UK (if appropriate – legal advice may be needed)
- verification of household finances to include all income, expenditure, assets and

debts.

- health and safety checks using the updated Brighton & Hove form. Hazardous plants must also be identified and where possible removed before a child is placed.
- checks on pets must also be completed and be updated when necessary. Potentially dangerous pets, including all dogs, venomous snakes, and so on, must be thoroughly considered before a child is placed. A specialist assessment must be carried out on any dogs where their size or number could be a potential threat to children

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