

## **Kent County Council**

### **Assessment Process for New Adult/s and New Partners Joining a Fostering Household**

#### **Document Details (Accessible Format)**

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## **Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Context
3. Process for Adult/s and New Partners Joining a Fostering Household  
Flowchart

## **Introduction**

A foster carer's household composition may change over time with new or returning household members or new partner coming to live in the fostering home.

Having new members to the fostering household changes the practical and emotional functioning of the household, requires the investment of both energy and time in different ways and will impact on the developing relationships within the household. It is important that foster carers are aware that when new people join or come to live within their household, this will impact upon the household and any children who are being looked after. Any such changes in the fostering household composition, set up or circumstances therefore need to be carefully considered by the Fostering service to ensure that the fostering role is not adversely affected.

For the purposes of this guidance an adult in the household is defined as "a person who moves into a foster carer's home to live permanently or for the foreseeable future" e.g., a relative, new partner\*, foster carer's adult children returning to live at home, adult children's partners or friends who move in to live in the household.

This practice guidance is for foster carers and Fostering staff when there are changes in the composition of the fostering household. The guide will help ensure the Fostering service is clearly informed of who is a part of a foster carer's household at any given point, the circumstances of any new members and what their role is in the household, whilst considering any safeguarding or risk factors and maintaining safer care for children who are looked after and all those connected with the fostering household.

\*This process is for when a new partner moves into the fostering household and not a joint assessment with the approved foster carer.

## **Context**

Sharing information about personal/household changes is a key part of the supervisory relationship and require openness and transparency.

At the point of application, it should be discussed with fostering applicants during their initial assessment what would happen should they have new people join their household once approved as foster carers.

Approved foster carers should also be made aware the Foster Care Agreement states that foster carer(s) must immediately give the local authority full written notice of:

- Any intended change in the composition of their household:
- Any other change in their personal circumstance and any other event affecting either their capacity to care for any child placed or the suitability of their household.

The Kent Foster Carers Charter also highlights the commitment of Kent's foster carers to "inform their Fostering Social Worker of significant events or changes in the carer's life or family".

### **Process for Adult/s and New Partners Joining a Fostering Household**

Refer to the steps below for the process of assessing adults and new partners joining a fostering household.

### **Process for Adult/s and New Partners Joining a Fostering Household**

#### **Step 1. Foster carer informs the fostering service of a new/ returning member / new partner to their household partner**

Foster carer/s should inform the FSW immediately when they are considering people joining their household or making any decision to take on the care of any other child/vulnerable adult/s outside of the fostering role. Foster carer/s to inform the FSW whether it is the intention that the new person will be staying in the foster home on a permanent basis or the foreseeable future.

#### **Step 2. Initial discussion with FSW to determine viability of new person joining the fostering household**

The FSW and foster carer/s to consider the immediate implications of this addition on the foster carer, children in care and the whole household.

FSW to inform the foster carer/s that an assessment will be needed and recommend that the foster carer/s inform the person of the need for an assessment before they join the household. If changes occur without prior notice, the Fostering Manager must be informed and an immediate review of the foster carer's approval convened where necessary.

#### **Step 3. Checks & references started**

FSW to start checks immediately including DBS checks, Good Conduct Checks if lived out of the UK within the last 10 years, Local Authority Check, LADO, Social Media check and Personal References x2. SS472 will need to be signed to authorise checks.

**Step 4. Checks & references started**

Prior to a new household member staying overnight, arrangements for the stay including a risk assessment and updated Safe Care Plan should be completed by the FSW and the Fostering Manager informed.

**Step 5. Assessment of the adult/s completed by FSW**

Before the new household member moves in the fostering household permanently, an assessment of them and implications for the household should be presented to the fostering panel. Where this is not possible, the assessment should be done immediately within 4 weeks of the person joining the household.

Assessment process to include:

FSW meeting with the new household member face to face.

FSW, Foster Carer and new household member to clarify and agree the new member's role regarding the care of children placed in the household.

FSW to ensure the new household member is aware of Safe Care, safeguarding, confidentiality, allegations/complaint

**Step 6. Assessment report to be presented to the fostering panel.**

This assessment should be presented to the Fostering Panel as this is a significant change of circumstances and then signed off by ADM. Timescales to be agreed for new partner joint fostering assessment which should not be beyond a year from the change of circumstances.

**Step 7. Fostering Team updates case summary on Liberi**

Update Household Members tab on Foster Carers' file, Case Summary and the Family Profile.