

Wirral Fostering Service

Guidance on Ex Partners/Adult Children and Other References

IT TAKES A BIG **HEART** TO FOSTER



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1. Who is an Ex Partner and when should they be Contacted?

- If married or in a relationship for more than 5 years and living together within the last 10 years – to be contacted whether they had children or not. If the couple had children together they need to be interviewed, this also implies to any children of whom they have had significant care. If not a letter may be sent.
- Advise the prospective Foster Carer to let the ex-partner know regarding potential contact from the department.

2. Adult Children

- All adult children should be contacted, including any children of whom they have had significant care.

3. What Constitutes Contact?

There is an expectation that children would only be visited if they lived within a 30 mile radius. If outside this – letter and phone contact is acceptable. If there is no reply to the letter then a follow up phone call must be made.

Regarding an ex-partner where there are no children from the relationship – it is suggested that a letter only is sent. If no reply is received, then telephone contact is recommended. If there is no address for contact or if the contact is a failure, then this must be recorded on the file only, unless other risk factors emerge in the assessment.

4. What are we checking?

Child Protection matters and ability to parent.

5. What if they refuse to?

If a good reason is provided, then a view from panel should be sought before proceeding. E.g. Unresolved issues. Information will be shared unless this poses a serious risk to the referee.

6. Grandparents/Significant Support Figure

It is expected that visiting a grandparent or significant other should be a standard part of the assessment, especially if they are likely to be involved as a major support, or if there are concerns regarding extended family.

7. Current Employer

To write to current employers – standard reference request form with accompanying letter. In addition to contact previous employer if that employment was in a caring profession.

8. Headteachers/Nursery Teachers/Health Visitors

Contact to be made with the Head Teacher if there is a school age child in the family; Nursery Teacher if in pre-school and Health visitor if pre-school.

In addition if a child has a disability or special needs then contact should be made with the professionals involved with the family directly. It may be a psychologist/paediatrician/psychotherapist/GP.

9. Guidance on Interview with Ex-Partner

Interviews with ex partners can sometimes be difficult and it is helpful to have some ideas about the areas to cover in the interview.

It is envisaged that the interviewer will engage the ex-partner in a general discussion acknowledging that the relationship has ended.

It is important to look at the strengths in the relationship:

- Was it supportive?
- Was the relationship open/difficult to talk to; warm/distant?
- Was it on equal terms?
- What were the differences that led to breakdown?
- Describe the temperament/personality of the applicant
- Do you continue to have a friendship on any level? Can you describe this?
- What sort of parent was the applicant towards the children? Ask about each child. Does the applicant continue to have contact with the children? If not, why not?
- Would you have any concerns about the safety of a child being placed with the applicant?

10. Guidance on Questions for Adult Children

Some ideas about what to ask adult children of applicants when we interview them:

- Can you give me an overall impression of your childhood?
- How would you describe the way in which you were parented?
- Do you feel you had a close relationship with your mother/father? Can you tell me a happy memory with your mother/father?
- Can you tell me a sad memory with your mother/father?
- Can you describe an occasion when your mother/father has supported you in a time of crisis?
- How did your mother/father deal with you in adolescence? Did this bring up issues of growing up?
- Can you tell me how boundaries were set or discipline maintained when you were a child? Where you ever smacked as a child?
- Is there any aspect of your upbringing that you would not want to be repeated with a foster child?
- Do you have any concerns about your mother/father's suitability to care for a vulnerable child, or the safety of a child placed either physically, emotionally or sexually?