

RECRUITMENT AND ASSESSMENT POLICY

1. Purpose & Scope

Credo Care adheres to the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Fostering Services (2011) and Assessment and approval of foster carers: Amendments to the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4 2013: in their approval of and registration of carers. Please refer to these documents as well as the Fostering Panel Procedures for further clarification.

2. Procedure

General Principals in Responding to Enquiries and Applications

The fostering role is a complex yet rewarding one and it attracts people for a number of reasons.

It is important that anyone expressing an interest in fostering should have access to appropriate information before any decision is made about assessment. Any interested party contacting Credo Care about fostering should receive the following information:

- A realistic and practical verbal introduction about fostering
- Local need and a general overview of how Credo Care tries to meet it
- The needs of children looked after by local authorities
- The assessment process, including approximate timescales
- Information about required checks, references and the purpose of them
- Written material, in the form of leaflets that the visiting worker can leave with the family.
- The accommodation necessary, especially the proposed sleeping arrangements.

Credo Care listen to what the prospective foster carers have to say and appreciate what they have to offer. People's pre-conceived ideas about fostering at the very start can sometimes be useful clues to their motives for wishing to foster. Finally, Credo Care help the family to decide whether to proceed or not, setting out the nature of the next stages – interview, preparation groups and formal assessment - and outlining the reasons for this. The processes adopted by Credo Care adhere to anti discriminatory practise.

Initial Registration of Interest (ROI) Received

An initial enquiry is recorded and followed up by telephone between Credo Care and the potential foster carer. This discussion and information is recorded on the Registration of Interest Database (ROI) within our electronic management system Credo Base.

The focus in the early stages of the selection process is the sharing of some basic information with the prospective foster carers including;

- The qualities, skills or aptitudes being sought or to be achieved;
- The needs of the children that Credo Care supports
- The standards to be applied in the assessment;
- The stages and content of the selection process and where possible timescales involved;

- The information to be given to applicants

Administrative staff then sends an information pack that provides a guide to the assessment process and other information pertaining to the foster carer recruitment process and what is involved in becoming a foster carer

If appropriate an initial visit to the potential foster carer's home is arranged and this will cover the following:

- Obtain details of the applicant's home and family circumstances.
- Provide answers to any questions the potential foster carer may have about Credo Care and fostering and the assessment process.
- Completion of the Initial home visit checklist

All information from the home visit is reviewed by the Registration of Interest (ROI) panel who will determine if the applicants should proceed or not. If it is decided not to pursue the matter, a letter will be sent by administrative staff to advise them of such and close the enquiry.

If the potential carers are successful they are notified in writing and if they have not already done so asked to complete the application form. Credo Care will assess their suitability in accordance with regulation 26. Regulation 26(1A) and undertake the two part assessment.

The Assessment of Prospective Foster Carers

Administration staff will open a file to record all information pertaining to the potential foster carers' application and checks. Stage one information is gathered, including relevant statutory checks, DBS, LA, NSPCC and medical checks. A Self-Assessment Health & Safety report will also be required as will the completion of a pet questionnaire (where applicable).

The decision about whether an applicant has successfully completed stage 1 will be made within 10 working days of all the information required in that stage being received. If in stage 1 it is decided that an applicant is not suitable to foster, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the independent review mechanism (IRM) or to make representations to the fostering service provider. Attendance at the Skills to Foster preparation training can be completed within stage one or two of the assessment.

The stage two assessment is then completed using the BAAF Assessment Form F. The assessor undertaking the assessment has to engage the family in discussions about themselves, their strengths and limitations and their motives for wishing to foster. This process provides information for Credo Care, to be used both to guide the decision that must finally be made about the prospective foster family and to help in the matching process.

Credo Care uses BAAF Form F to collect and present information about prospective Foster Carers. The assessment format highlights areas which the assessor may need to address before approval. Once completed, it will form the basis in which the family is presented to placing social workers, the assessment is the main body of work on which the placing social worker will accept or reject the suitability of that family for the child needing placement.

The assessment will be completed within eight months (NMS) Standard 14.4). Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing following the meeting.

Completing the Form F is an interactive process. The assessor can give the prospective foster carers a blank copy of the form to indicate the issues to be covered, asking the prospective foster carers to fill in parts of the form and so contribute to their assessment. The applicant's own contribution on the final BAAF Form F is clearly marked.

The information gathered during the assessment is obviously of a very personal nature. Applicants are reassured of the confidentiality attached to this information, but should be made aware that social workers considering matches will have access to this information.

Skills to Foster Preparation Course

Credo Care follows the comprehensive preparation and post approval process, designed by National Foster Care Association. The preparation/pre- approval process requires the prospective carers attendance at the "Skills to Foster" training course.

It is Credo Care's policy to ensure that the course presented is provided by either suitably experienced internal Staff or external specialist workers. Candidates are assessed throughout the Skills to Foster course.

General Aims of the Course:

- To give the prospective carers an idea of what fostering involves before they decide whether to proceed with their application
- To help delegates realise that fostering affects all members of the family
- To help potential foster carer candidates understand the range and diversity of the needs of children referred to Credo Care
- To gain an understanding of working with birth parents
- To look at different kinds of fostering and at the assessment process for all those who wish to continue
- To enable Credo Care to begin the general assessment process

The Assessment Report and the Social Work Decision

The assessment of prospective foster carers will always be undertaken by a qualified social worker. The social worker will assess the family's capacity to meet the complex needs of some children and their ability to work in partnership with a number of different agencies and also with birth parents. The assessment will need to consider the applicant's ability to manage behavioural issues and the emotional demands of the fostering task on both themselves and their own family members.

There may be occasion midway through the process which raises concerns about the potential foster carer's suitability. These concerns will be shared with the Fostering Manager by the assessor who will speak directly with the potential foster carers. At this point the foster carers may not be considered suitable candidates for Credo Care Fostering and advised to withdraw their application. The foster carers have the right for the stage two assessment to run to completion and can also make representation to the independent reviewing mechanism (IRM). Credo Care will work in accordance with the IRM guidelines however the final decision remains with the Agency Decision Maker. Once the

social worker has collated, analysed and concluded all the information within the form F, they will make a recommendation regarding approval and appropriate approval categories.

Approval of Foster Carers

Once the Form F assessment and statutory checks are in place and completed, the Assessment is returned to Credo Care, it is then checked by the Fostering Manager. Once the Fostering Manager has completed their check it is then passed on to the proof reader. Once proof read the Form F is passed to the Quality Controller who reads through the Form F highlighting any areas requiring further investigation and assessment. These discussions are held between the Fostering Manager and the Quality Controller. The potential foster carers are then required to attend the Independent fostering panel. Please see GP 11 Credo Care Foster Panel Process. If the fostering panel recommend approval this is passed to the Agency Decision maker (ADM) for the decision to approve or to not approve as registered Foster carers.

Right to Appeal or Review

Unfortunately there are cases where potential foster carers are not always suitable to work with Credo Care. In a situation where Credo Care decides to not continue with the approval or assessment of a potential foster carer because they are deemed not suitable the potential foster carer is entitled to the following rights of appeal.

Appeal Process: Form F assessment Stage 1

If in stage 1 it is decided that an applicant is not suitable to foster the decision maker will write to the applicant informing them of this decision and give full reasons for it, the applicant has no right to a review of this decision by the independent review mechanism (IRM) or to make representations to the fostering service provider. The applicant can complain via Credo's complaints process should they be unhappy with the way in which their case has been handled. The complaints process is only used to address whether or not the applicant's case has been handled in a reasonable way, rather than the question of the applicant's suitability to foster.

Appeal Process: assessment form F Stage 2

A stage 2 assessment that has been started must be completed, unless:

- the potential foster carer is deemed unsuitable as a result of stage 1 of the assessment (where stages 1 and 2 have been carried out in parallel)
- The potential foster carer withdraws from the process.
- It becomes apparent that the potential foster carer or an adult member of their household has been convicted of, or cautioned for, a specified offence.
- The assessment is terminated following a brief report that is presented to panel.

The applicant will be:

- notified that the brief or full report is to be sent to the panel
- Provided with a copy of the report; and given 10 working days from the date of the notification to send their observations to Credo Care. The applicant is informed in writing that they may (within 28 calendar days) of the determination by the ADM seek a review of this determination by the IRM or make representations to Credo Care.



3. Related Records & Forms

- Application Form & Pack FFP38
- Form F
- Interview Notes FFP45
- Relevant Statutory Checks

	Review of Documents
Person Responsible	HR&Admin Manager
Date Last Updated	07/04/2016