# GP Briefing on Completing Form AH for Prospective Adoptive Parents, Connected Person Carers and Foster Carers during the COVID-19 Pandemic from the North Yorkshire and York Designated Professionals

This guidance has been written by the Designated Professionals for Safeguarding Children and Children in Care, North Yorkshire and York. It aims to support local GPs and partner agencies in relation to the Adult Health assessments of Prospective Adoptive Parents, Connected Person Carers and Foster Carers. It is subject to change in line with any new guidance from NHS E/I, the Royal Colleges and the government.

## Key Points

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, if a GP is not able see adults face-to-face for the AH medicals that form part of the adoption and fostering process, these can be completed by reviewing what the adult has written, reviewing their health record and having a virtual consultation (telephone or video).

## Background

Nationally, it has been recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic could result in an increased need for children to be Looked After. Sadly some children may become orphaned and require long term foster care or adoption. This means that the need for adults to become Foster Carers and Adoptive Parents is greater than ever. The combination of the NHS being under pressure from managing the pandemic and the need to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus means that health professionals are only carrying out face-to-face consultations where these are absolutely necessary. In response to this, the adoption and fostering regulations have been amended by The Adoption and Children's (Coronavirus Amendment) Regulations 2020. These allow a temporary relaxation to the usual requirements until September 2020. Agencies will be able to proceed with an assessment of a Prospective Adoptive Parent even if the medical checks have not been received. They also allow agencies to proceed to part 2 of the Fostering Assessments even when medical checks have not been received.

In some areas of the country, since the start of the pandemic, there has been no GP capacity to carry out AH assessments. In these areas, Adoption and Fostering Assessments are proceeding by adults filling in a self-declaration about their health with no medical input. Our previous experience of when a Medical Adviser carries out the review of information on Form AH in order to complete their summary Medical Adviser Report, there are many cases where there are differences between what the adults write about their health and the information provided by the General Practitioner. This might be because some adults do not recognise the significance of things in their past medical history and so omit them. In some of the cases these discrepancies are such that, without the GP's additional advice, adults who do not have the necessary health to successfully look after children would have been accepted. In other cases, when the GP has been able to provide more specific details about how a condition affects an applicant, this information has enabled adults to be accepted as carers when they may not have been accepted without this additional information.

## Response in North Yorkshire and York during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Following an email exchange with Dr Charles Parker and Dr Andrew Lee, and discussions with colleagues in our Local Authorities, it has been agreed that in North Yorkshire and York, when GPs do not feel able to offer face-to-face appointments for AH assessments, there is the option to complete the Part C of Form AH after reviewing the information that the adult has provided themselves in the self-completed section (Part B), reviewing the applicant’s Primary Care medical record and holding a virtual consultation with them (either via phone or video).

The GP can then fill in as much of the Part C of Form AH as possible. This will result in one of two outcomes;

1. The GP feels they have gathered sufficient information to comment on health and lifestyle issues which may impact (now or in the future) on the applicant’s ability to care for a child.
2. The GP identifies concerns that do merit further exploration that require a physical examination. If this occurs then the GP would need to decide if they feel this could be done safely at this time or whether they recommend it is done later when the peak of the pandemic is passed (which would delay the adult’s application).

## Expectations for a Form AH completed remotely

The following sections should be completed as normal

1. Confirmation that Part B (self-completed section of Form AH) has been read
2. Sections 1-6, 8 and 10

For section 7:

* Please record the last recorded height and weight and the date it was recorded. If this was more than 12 months ago, the applicant should be asked if it is possible for them to weigh themselves (N.B. when this is recorded please document that the weight was reported by the applicant).
* For all the other parts of section 7, if the applicant’s medical record documents the outcome of a recent relevant examination this should be included with the date it was completed. However if there is not anything in the record, it will be acceptable to state that it was not able to examine the applicant as the assessment was carried out by telephone/video consultation due to the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For section 9:

* Please complete but clarify the limitations of the assessment as it is based on a review of the Primary Care records and a conversation with the patient

Two additional questions for completion have been added to the form. These are:

* Section 11 “This adult has a condition that means under the current Covid-19 guidance a recommendation has been made that they should self-isolate? Yes/No”
* Section 12 “This adult has a condition that means they are increased risk of morbidities if they contract COVID 19? Yes/No Please give details.”

Section 13 regarding comments from the examining doctor remains unchanged, but please document about the type of consultation used to complete the form.

We hope this guidance is helpful but if you have any questions please contact either Natalie.Lyth@nhs.net or s.snowden@nhs.net.