# Updated 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 October 2020

This updated 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

At the beginning of the COVID 19 Pandemic, the Designated Professionals provided advice on how AH medicals could be provided virtually. Since then **we have received guidance that** **although the majority of the Adult Health assessment can be completed virtually, there is a requirement for a recent height, weight, blood pressure check and urinalysis to be completed.** We have also worked with the Clinical Chair of North Yorkshire CCG to develop an adapted Form AH which, apart from the 4 components mentioned above, allows the physical examination to be replaced by a thorough systems review.

If the GP chooses to carry out the assessment virtually rather than face to face, the steps for the GP are:

1. To review the applicant’s medical record,
2. To review the health form completed by the applicant (Part B of Form AH),
3. To check if the applicant has had their height, weight, BP and urinalysis measured in last 3 months, and if not arranges these (N.B. a home BP machine could be used to check BP),
4. Carries out a virtual consultation (video is the preferred mode).

## 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 appointments when they are clinically indicated and the benefits outweigh the risks.

The North Yorkshire and York Designated professionals have worked with the Clinical Lead for the North Yorkshire CCG to develop a process that allows the majority of the Adult Health assessments to be carried out virtually. This has required significant amendments to the standard CoramBAAF Form AH. These amendments have been approved by CoramBAAF.

## 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 follow this virtual consultation process with prospective carers, as outlined above.

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. As the majority of the assessment will have been carried out virtually, any face-to-face appointment for an examination should be a shorter than would previously have been required, as the past medical history and symptom review will have already been reviewed.

**The ‘Form AH for use in North Yorkshire & Vale of York CCGs only’ has been updated to highlight that height, weight, BP and urinalysis are essential requirements in order for a carer’s application to proceed.**

Thank you for contributing to this important work at this difficult time.

We hope this guidance is helpful but if you have any questions please contact either Natalie.Lyth@nhs.net or s.snowden@nhs.net (Designated Doctors for Safeguarding Children and Children in Care, Vale of York & North Yorkshire CCGs).