

HEALTH ASSESSMENT OF PROSPECTIVE
ADOPTERS DURING COVID

Adoption & Fostering Alliance Scotland

Scottish legislation does not specify that a 'full medical examination' must be carried out on prospective adopters only that a medical practitioner needs to have prepared and signed the medical report.

Adoption Agencies (Scotland) Regulations 2009

*Duties of adoption agencies: assessment of prospective adopters
Regulation 7(5)*

Where the adoption agency determines that a person should be accepted for assessment as an adoptive parent it must –

(a) so far as is reasonably practicable obtain the information in Part I of Schedule 1

Schedule 1

Part I- information about prospective adopters

24. Name and address of the prospective adopter's registered medical practitioner.

25. A comprehensive medical report on the prospective adopter prepared and signed by a registered medical practitioner including such details as the medical adviser to the adoption agency considers necessary in the circumstances of each prospective adopter.

English legislation is much more prescriptive in that it requires a full medical examination to have been carried out by a registered medical practitioner.

The Adoption Agencies Regulations 2005

Prospective adopter's report

25.(1) This regulation applies where the adoption agency, following the procedures referred to in regulations 23 and 24, consider the prospective adopter may be suitable to adopt a child.

(2) The adoption agency must obtain the information about the prospective adopter which is specified in Part 1 of Schedule 4.

(3) The adoption agency must obtain—

(a) a written report from a registered medical practitioner about the health of the prospective adopter following a full examination which must include matters specified in Part 2 of Schedule 4 unless the agency has received advice from its medical adviser that such an examination and report is unnecessary; and

(b) a written report of each of the interviews with the persons nominated by the prospective adopter to provide personal references for him.

In Scotland to insist on practice in line with English rather than Scottish Regulations could leave an Agency open to criticism by unnecessarily extending the assessment and approval process of prospective adopters, thus causing delay in their availability to offer a home to a child.

COVID

AFA's Medical Advisors Forum has considered best practice in Scotland under the current restrictions to achieve a pragmatic balance, keeping caution and medical expertise at the centre of practice, but avoiding overzealous bureaucracy.

The focus for discussions recently has been what to do if GP's are not able to undertake an assessment because of other Covid related responsibilities. Some agencies are writing an initial letter just to clarify whether the GP will be able to do the assessment, and if not, sending a follow up letter about accessing information from the records. Copied below is an example of such a letter that has been used by Glasgow colleagues. (**NB** this is provided only as an example and will need to be adapted to reflect the fact that practice differs widely across health boards - in particular, not all are able to provide access to electronic records in the way suggested in this letter.)

Much adult work is being done based on self-declaration, especially with consent to access information from GPs. Some GPs are still completing AH2 forms. Some GPs have seen and examined patients, other GPs have not been involved at all in the process, making it difficult to establish consistent nationwide advice for how to proceed.

The question was raised as to whether a full medical examination would be required as a follow up to the self-declaration form. The consensus was that this should be decided on a case by case basis.

December 2020

EXAMPLE GP LETTER AND FORM

To send to GPs who are currently unable to undertake medical examination of prospective adopter

Dear

The above named patient, who I understand is registered with your practice, is applying to become a prospective adopter with (name of agency). As part of the legal obligations of the agency in assessing a prospective adopter information on their health needs to be considered.

We understand that during the pandemic you are not in a position to carry out a medical (AH) which is our usual way of obtaining information.

Our medical advisor is able to access information on clinical portal regarding the health of the carer so any significant health issues involving hospital attendance will be known about, however, in order to ensure that this person is suitable to care for children we would ask that you check their GP records for any information that may be of concern to the safety of children.

The type of information that may be in GP records and not held in clinical portal are:

- Disclosures of domestic violence
- Substance misuse
- Personality disorders
- Mental health problems
- Sexual abuse disclosures
- Any other issues that would raise concerns in this person caring for children.

The GP often holds important knowledge and we very much value your opinion.

Your patient has signed a consent form to make enquiries regarding their health and this is enclosed. We have enclosed a template letter for ease of reply if there are no issue of concern.

If there are any issues you would like to discuss please contact one of our medical advisors:

Add contact details

(form below)

PLEASE ENSURE THIS FORM IS RETURNED TO THE AGENCY

I have checked this persons GP held records and can confirm that in my opinion there are no issues in my knowledge that would be of concern in caring for children.

Signature

Date

Name (or practice stamp)

GMC Registration number

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Fax

Email