



18th November 2020

Dear Stakeholder

**Interim Flexibilities: The Fostering Panels (Establishment and Functions)
(Wales) Regulations 2018**

We wrote to you on the 13th October 2020 to update you on the position with the use of self-declaration health assessment forms for prospective foster carers from 1st October. In that letter we provided agreement that in cases where panels had already been arranged for applicants up to and including 7th November, these could proceed as planned where the self-declaration health form only was available

We are aware there are areas throughout Wales where prospective foster carers continue to experience difficulties with accessing GP health assessments. This seems to have been further exacerbated in some instances during the firebreak. Welsh Government recognises the importance of working closely with the fostering sector to ensure that we all respond flexibly to the dynamics of the pandemic.

We have recently met with representatives to discuss how we can keep the foster care system flowing whilst maintaining our focus on safeguarding children, minimising disruption to the fostering process and maintaining sufficiency of foster care placements.

As a result of discussions, we will implement the following:

- Prospective foster carers whose applications were already in the system **as at 8th November 2020** and who have been unable to access face to face or virtual health assessments with a GP during the assessment process, can proceed to panel as planned with any recommendation for approval based on a self-declaration of health.
- **From 8th November 2020** all new prospective foster carer applicants entering the system, must access either a face to face or remote health assessment by a GP during the assessment process and before progressing to foster panel.

- **By 31st March 2021**, all foster carers approved utilising a self-declaration of health form must have completed a full adult health assessment and the service must complete a review of their approval, under the regulatory first year review process.


It is important to use the time between now and the end of March to put in place full adult health assessments for your newly approved foster carers so that back-logs at the end of March 2021 are avoided.

We recognise the valuable contribution that medical advisors provide to the health assessment process for prospective foster carers and would encourage you, where possible, to continue to work closely with the medical advisor in your area to maximise the clinical support required for this process. Their support may also assist in alleviating any issues that arise with the ability to access health assessments. We do of course understand that not all agencies have access to a medical advisor.

Welsh Government will be keeping this situation under review and will hold regular dialogue with our partners.

I appreciate you working with us on this issue and I thank you for your continued support during the pandemic.

Yours faithfully



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