



Policy for Enhanced Police Disclosure and Barring

(DBS) Checks within the fostering household including babysitters

Contents:

- 1.1** DBS Checks for Foster Carers
- 1.2** DBS Checks for birth children, children in care and adults living as part of the household
- 1.3** DBS Checks for babysitters
- 1.4** Visitors to the Fostering Household including extended family members.
- 1.5** International Police Checks
- 1.6** Process for positive DBS Checks – Flowchart

1.1 DBS Checks for Foster Carers

All foster carers will be subject to completing a DBS check which is valid for 3 years. For new applications, the DBS check is completed by the Recruitment & Assessment Team Fostering Social Worker, with the check clearly recorded on the foster carers electronic LCS file, on the checks tab. All renewals will be completed by the Fostering Support/Kinship Team by the supervising social worker. The request for an updated check should be made at least 3 months before the check is due to expires, to ensure there is no period where a registered foster carer is without a valid DBS.

Applications to become a foster carer for BCC will not be progressed, if any of the following offences/cautions are recorded:

- Offences against children.

The following circumstances would be taken into account at the discretion of the local authority

Bristol City Council Fostering Policy

- Driving disqualifications.
- Any offence involving harm (assault) to another.

All offences and cautions recorded on a DBS will be subject to a report and risk assessment, with decision on whether to progress to assessment/continue approval. (*See 1.6 Process for positive DBS Checks*)

1.2 DBS Checks for birth children, children in care and adults living as part of the household

Foster carer's birth children will be subject to an enhanced check at age 18 as above, then every 3 years whilst they are living as part of the fostering household. It is not necessary to complete DBS checks for grown up children who are living away from home, unless they return regularly to stay overnight. (e.g. for university students returning to the fostering household).

Children in Care who continue to live in the fostering household, past the age of 18 years must have an Enhanced DBS check completed, at the point of turning 18, to ensure a valid DBS is in place for when they become an adult. All of the time they are living as part of the fostering household, e.g. through Staying Put or Shared Lives; they will be subject to a DBS Check every 3 years. This is the responsibility of the allocated Fostering Social Worker.

Any other adult including any lodgers living within the fostering household must have a DBS check completed and renewed every 3 years. Where there is a new partner joining the family, foster carers must advise the Fostering Social Worker of the change in relationships and the DBS check must be in place before the new partner stays overnight or moves into the home, where children in care are living as part of the household.

1.3 DBS Checks for babysitters

It is good practice for all foster carers to have a trusted babysitter identified who can be DBS checked and introduced to the child/young person and their details recorded within the placement plan arrangements. Where a foster carer is going to use a babysitter on a regular basis and they will be delegating the supervision of the child to another adult, a DBS check must be completed. The foster carer must provide the name and contact details of their designated babysitter to the Fostering Social Worker, to complete the DBS check. The babysitters name and the frequency of the care arrangement should be recorded in the Placement Plan/Delegated Authority forms for the child and the child's social worker should be advised by the foster carer if there are any changes to the original placement plan agreement. This arrangement should also be recorded in the child's individual Safe Care Plan.

Bristol City Council Fostering Policy

Babysitters for children in care must be over the age of 18 years and considered by the foster carer to be an appropriate adult to manage the needs of the child for a short period. One off emergency arrangement to care for a child within the fostering household do not require the adult to have a DBS check, where it is a one off situation that could not have been foreseen. For example, the main carer is taken unwell or dealing with an emergency for their birth child or other children in care. Foster Carers should record this within their diary records and advise both the child's social worker and fostering social worker of the emergency situation. The preference would be to call upon a local BCC foster carer, who is known to the child and could support with emergency care.

If a child in care is going to play at a friend's house or visit an extended member of the foster carers' family, the adult/family they are visiting is not required to have a DBS check. The reason for this is to enable the child or young person to enjoy the same activities as any other child of their age, for example attending a sleepover or birthday party. It is also to ensure foster carers can be delegated the authority to make arrangements for the child, alongside their birth children as part of normal family life. (*See policy for Overnight Stays in Foster Carer Handbook*)

1.4. Visitors to the Fostering Household including extended family members.

Visitors to the fostering household do not require DBS checks as will not be having supervision or care of the looked after child. The foster carer is responsible for the Safe Care arrangements in the household and ensuring they do not leave children or young people unattended with visitors to the household. Should visitors stay overnight for extended periods of time, they will require a DBS Check. For one off overnight stays, a DBS check is not required but the child's social worker and fostering social worker should be advised and Safe Care Plans should be discussed and updated, to ensure everyone in the household is aware of the Safe Care Plan.

1.5 International Police Checks

Where applicants, foster carers or adults living within the household have had periods of over 6 months living within another country, an international police check will be completed. The process for this varies depending upon the country; guidance can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/.../criminal-records-checks-for-overseas-applicants>. Any costs associated with this check, will be funded by BCC Fostering Service.

1.6 Process for positive DBS Checks

Any check for an applicant, foster carer or adult living within the household, that contains any information on cautions, offences/convictions or other recorded information, must be signed off by the Service Manager, as per the DBS flowchart. A report using the DBS disclosure Report Template should be submitted and outcome recorded on LCS. (*see flowchart*)

Bristol City Council Fostering Policy

Should a person be cautioned or convicted for a crime whilst they are an approved foster carer for BCC or changes to the criminal record of any adult living within the household, the foster carer must advise the Fostering Service immediately, who will make a decision on whether their fostering approval needs to be reviewed at panel. This would be viewed as a significant event/change in circumstances within the household and consideration given to holding an early review of the foster carers.

Foster Carers are responsible for advising BCC if there is a change in the criminal record to any significant person who is a visitor to their home and where there are any risks to a child, this should be recorded in the Safe Care Plan. There is also an expectation of transparency where if foster carers are involved in any situation that could bring BCC into disrepute, that they would advise their Fostering Social Worker immediately, eg subject to an employment tribunal, allegation in any other capacity such as employment or within a voluntary position.

Flow Chart

