

The role of the GP in Adult Health Assessments

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Objectives

- Background
- Legal and statutory duties
- General principles concerning health assessments/
the role of the GP
- Dilemmas
- Importance of GP comments
- Cases

Aim of substitute care

- To provide children with nurturing carers and secure, stable placements lasting as long as a child requires them
- Carers need to have robust physical and mental health to be able to cope readily with parenting these vulnerable and sometimes challenging children

- A comprehensive assessment will assist agencies in understanding the level of health risk that must be considered alongside a range of other factors in order to reach a decision about approval.
- The primary purpose of the Adult Health Assessment and medical adviser's advice is to inform the assessing social worker of any health issues that may need to be explored in the social work assessment

Guiding principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Parenting capacities are more important than perfect health
- Honesty and openness are essential

Legal and statutory duties

Prospective adopters

- Adoption agency obtains a report prepared by a fully registered medical practitioner following a full examination
- The Adoption and Children (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations 2020 require that adult health assessments for adoption can only be completed by GPs since September 2020

Fostering assessment

- Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 require ‘details of the carer’s health supported by a medical report
- A final decision cannot be made without a medical report being obtained and considered as part of the suitability assessment

Joint Statement from the RCGP and the BMA re Medical assessments for prospective foster carer and adopters (March 2021)

“The RCGP and the BMA recognize that the requirement for GP practices to continue to offer adult health assessments is pressure on an already stretched service. However, they are necessary to maintain sufficient safe placements for vulnerable children. We would like to encourage GP practices to undertake these assessments where possible.”



- The final decision regarding the approval of adopters and foster carers is not a medical one
- Health information is important but not the sole criterion. Medical reports assist in the approval and matching of prospective parents/carers with vulnerable children



Common conditions and dilemmas

- Obesity
- Smoking
- Mental health issues
- Alcohol
- Blood-borne virus infection
- Fertility treatment
- Treated cancers
- Disability



Real life example 1



Adobe Acrobat
Document



Real life example 2



Adobe Acrobat
Document

Comments about weight must be

- Honest
- Copied to applicant
- Sensitive to the distress which will result
- Further investigations always initiated in the spirit of promoting health not looking for ways to exclude
- Adoption and fostering medicals can make people healthier!

The unanswered questions

- Does obesity significantly limit a person's ability to parent?
- Most research based on children living with birth parents
- Is an obese adult still able to provide a healthy environment for a child?
- Is there a physical and/or psychological impact on a child who is placed with obese substitute parents?

Case 1 Obesity and kinship care

- Mrs D applied to be a special guardian to her granddaughter, aged 3 months
- 52 years old, recently bereaved, 2 children still living at home
- Fibromyalgia and claiming disability benefit
- BMI 38, smokes 20 cigarettes per day

Case 2 Cancer survivors

- Mr and Mrs P applied to adopt a child
- Mrs P is 40 years old
- Invasive carcinoma of the breast 5 years previously
- In-vitro fertilization with harvested and frozen eggs unsuccessful

Case 3: Disability, infertility and obesity

- Mr and Mrs S applied to be considered to adopt a child
- Mrs S is 35 years old, visually impaired and uses a guide dog
- Non-smoker, normal weight

- Mr S is 40 years old,
- 1 episode of anxiety and depression 10 years previously, resolved with no treatment
- BMI 34, Non-smoker

- Unexplained infertility



Questions?





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