



Royal College of  
General Practitioners



## Medical assessments for prospective foster carer and adopters

GPs and their teams have rightly been focused on COVID-19 and the vaccination programme, working hard to make sure patients are safe. The usual business of GPs, and their teams, has been prioritised according to need, and some work has been necessarily paused to give clinicians the space to respond to the pandemic. Medical assessments for prospective carers and adopters are a case in point in many parts of the country.

Along with other parts of the government, the Department for Education worked to make the requirements around medicals more flexible. The changes mean that the full adult health assessments can be accepted at any stage of the approval process, as long as they are available for the final decision. These temporary arrangements have been extended to 30 September 2021 in recognition of the challenges of the pandemic.

The temporary regulations do not remove the need for medical reports as they still must be obtained before the relevant agency can come to a decision on the suitability of the prospective adopters and foster carers. These medical assessments are an important safeguard for both the adults and the children, and they are a statutory requirement. A final decision cannot be made without a medical report being obtained and considered as part of the suitability assessment.

A number of these prospective carers and adopters have postponed their assessments for as long as possible, and now await only their medical assessment before the final decision can be made. While the numbers affected are relatively small, the impact on both adults and children is considerable.

The RCGP and the BMA recognise that the requirement for GP practices to continue to offer adult health assessments for these patients 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.

*This is a joint statement from the RCGP and the BMA  
March 2021*