

Appendix 1: Guidance on Questions to ask Potential Carers of Children From Abroad who do not Clearly Have Parental Responsibility

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018, sets out Principles and Parameters for completing a good Assessment

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf

When completing Assessments with children who may have been victims of Modern Day Slavery, including human trafficking and/ or Children from abroad, additional consideration should be given to certain factors. Some, but not all, of these factors may only be relevant to those children from abroad, including those trafficked children.

During the assessment phase, give consideration to the completion of a [Child Exploitation Screening Tool](#), to explore the wider issues relating to their exploitation with the young person which will strengthen your assessment and give consideration to the appropriateness of a discussion at MACE where targeting of perpetrators or locations of concern and the disruption of exploitation can be tasked across partners.

Operation Insignia is a multi-agency system of sharing information with Lincolnshire Police. The form can be found at the following link [LSCP Partnership Information Report](#)

The first contact with the child and/or carers is crucial to the engagement with the family and the promotion of trust which underpins the future support, advice and services. Particular sensitivities which may be present include:

- Anxiety raised by professionals asking similar questions to ones previously asked;
- Lack of understanding of the separate role of social services, that it is not an extension of police;
- Lack of understanding of why an assessment needs to be carried out;
- Previous experience of being asked questions under threat or torture, or seeing that happen to someone else;
- **Past Trauma;**
- Past Regime/ experiences can impact upon the child's mental and physical health. This experience can make concerns from the Authorities about minor injury or poor living conditions seem trivial and this mismatch may add to the fear and uncertainty;

When the Assessment is being completed in regards to Children from Abroad, including Trafficked Children from abroad, there may also be additional concerns to consider:

- **Concerns around immigration status;**
- Fear of being sent back to own country;

- The journey itself as well as the previous living situation may have been the source of trauma;
- **The shock of Arrival;**
- The alien culture, system and language can cause shock and uncertainty, and can affect mood, behaviour and presentation.

Reluctance to divulge information, fear, confusion or memory loss can easily be mistaken for lack of co-operation, deliberate withholding of information or untruthfulness.

The first task of the initial contact is engagement; open questions are most helpful, with a clear emphasis on reassurance and simple explanations of the role and reasons for assessment. If the "engagement" with the family is good there are more likely to be opportunities to expand on the initial contact, as trust is established

- The assessment has to address not only the barriers which arise from any cultural, linguistic and religious differences, but also the particular sensitivities which come from the experiences of many such children and families.
- The needs of the child have to be considered based on an account given by the child or family about a situation which the professional has neither witnessed nor experienced. In addition it may be presented in a language, and about a culture and way of life with which the professional is totally unfamiliar or has only basic knowledge about.
- It is vital that the services of an interpreter are employed in the child's first language and that care is taken to ensure that the interpreter knows the correct dialect. If that interpreter shares more than a common language, and are professionally trained, they can sometimes be a rich source of information about traditions, politics and history of the area from which the child has arrived. They may be able to advise on issues like the interpretation of body language and emotional expression.

Where the assessment is being completed in regards to a Child from Abroad, within the first contact with the child and carer(s) it is however also vital not to presume that the child's views are the same as their carer, or that the views and needs of each child are the same. Seeing each child alone is crucial, particularly to check out the stated relationships with the person accompanying them. (Someone allegedly from the same place of origin should have a similar knowledge of the place, for example). Clearly the professional is going to be seen as in "power" and as such a child may believe that they must "get it right" when they may not wholly understand the system or even the question. The speed of the interviewing of a child should aim to be at the speed appropriate to the child, although the need to ensure that the child is safe may become paramount in some circumstances. P Some core questions to be addressed are included in the section: *Guidance on Questions to ask Potential Carers of Children from Abroad who do not clearly have Parental Responsibility*, at the end of this document.

Child's Developmental Needs

Things to bear in mind include:

- Health, behaviour and social presentation can be affected by trauma and loss. Famine and poverty can have an impact upon development;
- Wider health needs may need to be considered, including HIV, Hepatitis B and C and TB. (this applies to the parent/carer also);

- Education. What has school meant to this child?
- Self care skills. Not to judge competence by comparing with a child of the same age in this country. This child may have had to be very competent in looking after themselves on the journey but unable to do other basic tasks. In some countries some children will have been working or have been involved in armed conflict. Loss of a parent can enhance or deprive a child of certain skills. Having had to overcome extreme adversity can result in a child who is either deeply troubled or both resourceful and resilient;
- Identity. Who is this child? What is their sense of themselves, their family, community, tribe, race, history?
- Physical appearance. Life experience and trauma can affect this. Lack of nourishment may make the child present as younger or older;
- Perceptions of what constitutes disability are relative and attitudes towards disabled children may be very different;
- The impact of racism on the child's self image and the particular issues currently faced by asylum seeking children and their families.

Parenting Capacity

Things to bear in mind include:

- War, famine and persecution can make a family mobile. The family may have moved frequently in order to keep safe. The stability of the family unit might be more important to the child than stability of place. Judgements that mobility may equate with inability to provide secure parenting may be entirely wrong. In some countries regular migration to deal with exhaustion of the land is part of the culture;
- The fact that a child seems to have been given up by a parent may not imply rejection, as the motive may have been to keep the child safe or seek better life chances for him/her;
- Talking about parents/ family can be stressful and painful - as can not being given the chance to do so regularly;
- Importance of the extended family/community rather than focusing on Europe and its traditional view of family;
- Not to presume that you cannot contact a parent who is living abroad unless you have established that this is the case by actively seeking to do so;
- Lack of toys for a child may indicate poverty or different cultural norms rather than poor parenting capacity to provide stimulation;
- The destructive impact on parenting capacity of racism against asylum seekers;
- The additional issues of parenting a child conceived through rape - either dealing with the negative response of the partner or with the stress of keeping it secret from him.

Family and Environmental Factors

The importance of economic and social hardship is apparent. In addition there may be issues such as:

- Family history and functioning may include the loss of previous high status as well as periods of destitution;
- Different concepts of who are/have been important family members and what responsibility is normally assumed by the whole community, e.g. who a child should reasonably be left with.

Tell, Explain and Describe (TED)

When using probing questions, TED can become your best friend. TED stands for three simple words that will help you get the answers you are looking for: Tell, Explain and Describe.

Some examples of TED questions include:

- Tell me, how will that affect you?
- Tell me, has this happened before?
- Tell me, what was your main motivation for calling?
- Explain to me, what impact has this had on your...?
- Explain to me, how did this situation begin?
- Explain to me, what difficulties did you face when you tried to...?
- Describe how you felt about that
- Describe how it looks
- Describe your ideal outcome

By starting a question with one of these words, you are essentially demanding an answer without letting them know that you are.

Pros to a TED Question

- It provides an invitation to provide lots of information. Potentially it can provide a “key” piece of information just using one “question” that may take several other types of question to find.
- The order that someone tells you information can give an indication about how important they currently feel that is to them and their life.

Cons to a TED question.

- It can provide lots of information. Sometimes the conversation just requires a yes or no commitment.

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It is important that the questions are rephrased for each interview so that the interview does not become interrogatory in tone. Would also need to speak to child on their own (with interpreter) in order to establish child's own views and consistency between child and adult's account of circumstances; Establish carers ID and immigration status; Establish any previous contact with this or other local authorities/agencies in UK and abroad.

1. How do you know the child? Friend/relative;
2. What is your relationship and through which parent are you related to the child?
3. How long have you personally known the child/family?
4. Please give details/names about individual family members?
5. Which town or city does the child in your care come from?
6. Please describe their family home/surroundings/environment?
7. If you have never seen this child before - how do you know this child belongs to your relative?
8. Can you tell me why the child has come to this country?
9. Did the child have any contact with you prior to their arrival in this country?
10. Has the child stayed with anyone else, or in another area in this country, or on the way to Britain?
11. Are the child's parents alive or dead?
12. If alive, where are the child's parents?
13. Do you know why the parents sent their child to Britain and to you?
14. Did the parents ask you to look after the child and do you have anything in writing?
15. Are the parents aware that the child is with you?
16. Are you in contact with the child's parents and if so by what means?
17. Would it be possible for us to contact the child's parents?
18. Who brought the child into the country?
19. Who paid for their passage?
20. By which route/transport did they arrive?
21. Do they have any other friends or relatives in this country?
22. Are you in contact with other friends or relatives, if yes please provide their details?
23. If yes, why did they not stay with them?
24. Which documentation does the child have containing their identity and nationality?
25. Do you have a letter from Home Office stating that you are the carer/guardian?
26. How did the Home Office decide that you should be the guardian/carer?
27. Do you have a partner/husband/wife, if yes, is he/she happy to continue to care for this child?

28. Do you have any children? If yes what are their ages and gender?
29. How do you think caring for another child will impact on your own family/finances?
30. Does the child have his own bedroom?
31. What responsibility are you willing to take for the child - i.e. basic essentials/ carer's role/legal responsibility?
32. How long are you able to commit yourself to this responsibility?