



NOTICE OF MEETING

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE DECISION MEETING (SPECIAL)

MONDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 10.00 AM

CONFERENCE ROOM A - SECOND FLOOR, CIVIC OFFICES

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If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE DECISION MEETING

Councillor Ryan Brent (Conservative)

Group Spokespersons

Councillor Alicia Denny, UK Independence Party

Councillor Rob Wood, Liberal Democrat

Labour Group Spokesperson - Vacant

(NB This Agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting.)

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Deputations by members of the public may be made on any item where a decision is going to be taken. The request should be made in writing to the contact officer (above) by 12 noon of the working day before the meeting, and must include the purpose of the deputation (for example, for or against the recommendations). Email requests are accepted.

AGENDA

- 1 Apologies for absence**
- 2 Declarations of Interest**

3 Means Testing Assessment Policy for Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangements and Residence Orders (Pages 3 - 48)

Purpose of report

To seek approval from the Cabinet Member, to the revised and updated Means Testing Assessment Policy attached at Appendix 1; as well as to the engagement and implementation process with carers.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet Member approve:

- i. **The implementation of the '*Means Testing Assessment Policy for Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement and Residence Orders*' at Appendix 1, with effect from 9th April 2017; noting potential changes to the 2017-18 Basic Income Support Personal Allowance Rates once approved by the Department for Work and Pensions (see Appendix 2).**
- ii. **The alignment of the weekly allowance rates for both holders of Adoption and Residence Orders with the age related Standard Fostering Allowance, with effect from the 9th April 2017.**
- iii. **The proposed transitional protection arrangements for carers as set out in section 8 of the report.**
- iv. **The proposed engagement and implementation process with carers as set out in section 9 of the report; which will be led by the Financial Assessment and Benefits team, together with officers from the Children's Social Care service.**
- v. **To delegate authority to the Section 151 officer to update the personal allowance rates as required, ensuring that they remain in line with the rates published by the Department for Work and Pensions.**

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Agenda Item 3



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care
Date of meeting:	20 February 2017
Subject:	Means Testing Assessment Policy for Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangements and Residence Orders
Report from:	Sarah Newman, Deputy Director of Children's Services - Children's Social Care Chris Ward, Director of Finance and Information Services
Report by:	Richard Webb, Finance Manager for Education & Children's Services Kelly Redman, Team Leader - Financial Assessments, Income and Recovery
Wards affected:	All Wards
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval from the Cabinet Member, to the revised and updated Means Testing Assessment Policy attached at Appendix 1; as well as to the engagement and implementation process with carers.

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member approve:

- i. The implementation of the '*Means Testing Assessment Policy for Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement and Residence Orders*' at Appendix 1, with effect from 9th April 2017; noting potential changes to the 2017-18 Basic Income Support Personal Allowance Rates once approved by the Department for Work and Pensions (see Appendix 2).
- ii. The alignment of the weekly allowance rates for both holders of Adoption and Residence Orders with the age related Standard Fostering Allowance, with effect from the 9th April 2017.

- iii. **The proposed transitional protection arrangements for carers as set out in section 8 of the report.**
- iv. **The proposed engagement and implementation process with carers as set out in section 9 of the report; which will be led by the Financial Assessment and Benefits team, together with officers from the Children's Social Care service.**
- v. **To delegate authority to the Section 151 officer to update the personal allowance rates as required, ensuring that they remain in line with the rates published by the Department for Work and Pensions.**

3. Background

- 3.1. The current financial support and assessment processes applied by the Financial Assessments and Benefits (FAB) team, on behalf of Children's Social Care, have not been reviewed or updated for a number of years. The current assessment processes are complicated and have developed and evolved with the different care orders. The current means testing assessments processes applied by the FAB team are also not consistent with those that they apply to Adult Services; as the Children's assessments exclude capital thresholds, etc.
- 3.2. The means testing assessment policy attached at Appendix 1, has been updated and revised to ensure consistency, fairness, transparency as well as compliance with the relevant regulations and guidance. For the purpose of this policy the Council has applied principles from the standardised means test model - as issued by the Department for Education Skills and The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014; which is consistent with the process applied in Adult Services.

4. Introduction

- 4.1 The means testing assessment policy attached at Appendix 1 will apply to all carers subject to an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order (SGO), Child Arrangement Order or a Residence Order and who are eligible to receive financial support from the Council.
- 4.2 As highlighted within the Policy, the means testing assessment process will not be applied when consideration is being given to providing financial support in respect of:
 - the legal costs (including court fees) of making an application to court in respect of a looked after child where the local authority is in support of the application;

- legal and court costs involved in varying or discharging an order made in respect of a child previously looked after; or
 - expenditure for the purpose of introducing an agency adoptive child to their adoptive parent.
- 4.3 Additionally, the means testing assessment process will not be applied to former foster carers to whom the two year transitional protection period applies under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 or Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005.
- 4.4 The Deputy Director of Children's Services - Safeguarding will also have the ability to dis-apply the means testing assessment process for a carer; where the application of the assessment would result in additional costs to the Council.

5. Key Policy Changes

- 5.1 As highlighted previously, the means testing assessment policy attached at Appendix 1, has been updated and revised to ensure consistency, fairness, transparency as well as compliance with the relevant regulations and guidance.
- 5.2 There are a number of potential benefits that arise from the updated means testing assessment policy; which include:
- The assessment process will be clearer and more transparent for both carers and officers within Children's Social Care.
 - The assessment process will reduce the number of contacts required with the carer.
 - If a young person transitions into Adult services, the assessment processes will be consistent.
 - The assessment processes will be aligned with that for Adult Social Care clients which will enable other FAB officers to support Children's Social Care; whereas currently the knowledge of the children's assessment process is limited to certain individuals.
- 5.2 There are a number of differences between the current means testing assessment processes and the proposed policy at Appendix 1. The main changes are:
- An amended Personal Allowance. To ensure that the household has adequate financial resources, a personal allowance will be applied (according the households specific circumstances). The personal allowance will be set at the Basic Income Support Levels, (applicable amount plus age related premiums, dependent children, family and disability related premiums), plus a 25%

adjustment in line with The Care and Support (Charging & Assessment) Regulations 2014.

This new 25% adjustment replaces the previous General Allowance in the assessment process; which was calculated at 30% of total income and therefore benefited those with the highest income levels.

- The introduction of a savings/capital threshold. In circumstances where the carer(s) have savings in excess of those specified within the Care Act or a second property, then financial support would not be payable.
- The introduction of Tariff Income. This will apply where carer(s) have savings/capital above the lower threshold level, but below the upper threshold level, specified in the Care Act Regulations.
- Benefits claimed in respect of the child are deducted after the calculation of the maximum support available.

5.3 In addition to the above changes, the new policy also provides greater clarity in respect of the arrangements for the recovery of overpayments of financial support. Overpayments may be recovered from either future weekly payments of financial support, or instead an invoice may be raised to the carer.

5.4 The method of recovery will depend on both the amount of the overpayment and whether the carer is expected to be in receipt of future weekly payments of financial support.

6. Adoption and Residence Order Allowances

6.1 During this review into the financial support arrangements for holders of Adoption, Residence and Special Guardianship Policy, the current level of allowances for Adoption and Residence Orders was considered.

6.2 With the implementation of the new Special Guardianship Policy in October 2016, the weekly allowance for Special Guardians was aligned with the Standard Fostering Allowance.

6.3 It is therefore proposed that the weekly allowance for both holders of Adoption and Residence Orders is increased and aligned to the Standard Fostering Allowance, in order to provide consistency and transparency across all care order types. Any financial support provided to these carers will be based on the means test assessment, undertaken in line with the policy proposed at Appendix 1.

- 6.4 The table below shows the current and proposed rates. The financial impact of these proposals is included within financial assessment in section 7.

	Current weekly Allowance 2016-17 £	Standard Fostering Allowance 2016-17 £
0 to 4 Years	72.95	140.00
5 to 10 Years	86.09	156.00
11 to 15 Years	112.40	177.00
16 to 18 Years	149.70	208.00

7. Financial Impact Assessment

- 7.1 In order to quantify the potential financial impact of the new means testing assessment policy, a sample of 43 (20%) payments were selected from across the below categories of care orders; based on the payments made in May 2016. A desk based assessment was undertaken to determine the impact on the level of financial support payable; if the new assessment process had been applied.
- 7.2 During May 2016, the Council was providing financial support in respect of 214 children, cared for by 158 carers. The table below shows the breakdown of children for which financial support was being provided by type of care order.

Type of Care Order	Number of Children No.	Annual Financial Support* £
Adoption	60	480,000
Residence	21	100,000
Special Guardianship	133	836,000
	214	1,416,000

** Estimated annual cost based on May 2016 payments*

- 7.3 As the FAB team do not currently collect information in respect of savings or capital, it has not been possible to determine at this stage how many carer(s) may be affected by this policy change.
- 7.4 There are a number of carers in receipt of financial support who were previous foster carers and whose financial support is based on the previous foster care allowance and skill fees, less the amount of child benefit that they are now entitled to. As referred to above, where the former foster carers are within the two year transitional protection period, then the proposed means test assessment process would not apply to

them during this period, and they will be eligible to continue to receive the standard fostering allowance and the remuneration (skill fee) element of their financial support, less the child benefit amount.

7.5 Where the two year transitional protection no longer applies to the carer, but they continue to be eligible to receive financial support, then the means test assessment policy will be applied. Based on the May dataset, there were circa 90 former foster carers outside of the transitional protection period, who will now require a means test assessment to be applied to their payment. It has not been possible to complete a desk based review of those carers, as the FAB team do not currently hold the necessary financial information for them.

7.6 From the sample of 43 cases reviewed, only 22 had previously had a financial assessment applied. The application of the new means testing assessment process, as mentioned earlier, has been applied using the information held by the FAB team at the date of the last assessment and does not take into account any savings or capital. Additionally a number of assumptions have been applied in order to enable comparability, including:

- The child's age remains the same as at the previous assessment point, for the determination of financial allowances.
- Personal allowances, income and expenditure remain the same as at the previous assessment point, other than in respect of the changes set out at 5.2 above.
- Any previously deductible expenses, now no longer eligible (such as water, sewage, etc.) have been excluded.
- Application of the proposed new allowance rates for Adoption and Residence orders.

The financial impact of the application of the new means testing assessment process on the 22 samples cases is shown in the table below.

Type of Care Order	No of case previously means tested	Current total weekly financial support £	Current total annual financial support £	Estimated total change in weekly financial support £	Estimated total change in annual financial support £	Average estimated weekly change in financial support (per case) £
Adoption	7	636	33,054	(224)	(11,648)	(32)
Residence	4	300	15,661	(12)	(624)	(3)
Special Guardianship	11	807	41,972	(110)	(5,720)	(10)
	22	1,743	90,687	(346)	(17,992)	(16)

- 7.7 If the estimated change in the annual financial support shown above for the sample cases, is extrapolated across the other previously means tested carers, the estimated change in financial support could amount to £88,000.
- 7.8 If the change in the annual financial support was extrapolated across all carers, (except those former foster carers currently within the two year transitional period) then the estimate change in financial support could amount to £153,000. The reduction in the level of financial support could potentially be greater as these carers had not previously been means tested.

8. Transitional Protection Arrangements

- 8.1 It is recognised that following the introduction of the new means test assessment policy, the level of financial support payable to some carers may be reduced; particularly where fall they within the new capital/savings thresholds or where the previous means test assessment process had not been applied.
- 8.2 Therefore, it is proposed that transitional protection arrangements will be put in place in the circumstances listed below. These transitional protection arrangements will apply to existing carers in receipt of financial support and who are eligible for means testing between the 9th April 2017 and 8th July 2017; under the criteria within the policy.
- The carers are no longer eligible to receive financial support under the new policy because:
 - They have savings, of £23,250.00 (single) or of £46,500.00 (joint) in line with the Care Act 2014 single charging framework.
 - They own a second property (other than the home they reside in).
 - The carers experience a reduction of:
 - more than 50% in their weekly level of financial support; and
 - the reduction is greater than £75 per week.
- 8.3 The transitional protection arrangements will apply for 18 months, as follows:
- In the first 6 months, carers would receive **80%** of their previously assessed weekly financial support (prior to the new policy).
 - In the next 6 months, carers would receive **60%** of their previously assessed weekly financial support (prior to the new policy).
 - For a further 6 months, carers would receive **40%** of their previously assessed weekly financial support (prior to the new policy)

Where the amount payable calculated under new assessment process exceeds the above transitional protection amounts, then the protection arrangements will no longer apply.

- 8.4 It is expected that the above transitional protection arrangements would be applicable mainly to carers affected by the new capital/savings thresholds or where the previous means test assessment process had not been applied. As highlighted previously within the report, as the FAB team do not hold the information required for these carers to undertake a desk based financial assessment, it is not possible to quantify the number of carers who would benefit from these arrangements.
- 8.5 For those previously means tested carers referred to above at paragraph 7.6, two carers would benefit from the transitional protection arrangements. Of the 20 remaining cases the financial modelling undertaken (see table below) shows the financial impact is not expected to be significant, other than for the potential impact of the new capital/savings thresholds.

Type of Care Order	No of cases previously means tested	Average estimated weekly change in financial support (per case) £	Average % weekly change in financial support (per case) £	Maximum estimated weekly gain in financial support (per case)	Maximum estimated weekly reduction in financial support (per case)
Adoption	5	(13)	(14%)	£16	£(52)
Residence	4	(3)	(4%)	£4	£(18)
Special Guardianship	11	(10)	(14%)	£15	£(59)

9. Engagement and Implementation Process

- 9.1 It is usual practice for the FAB team to visit all clients that they support, when there is a change to a Council policy which may affect the payments to or by clients.
- 9.2 It is therefore proposed that following approval of this report by Cabinet Member; that the FAB team undertake to visit each of the carers receiving financial support under Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement or Residence Orders.
- 9.3 Initially a review of all Carer's will be conducted by Children Services - where deemed appropriate an Officer from Children's Social Care will be assigned to the FAB team in order to complete a joint visit when discussing the policy changes.
- 9.4 The purpose of the visits will be to undertake a financial assessment review in accordance with the new means testing policy at Appendix 1

and explain to the carer any potential changes in their level of financial support, arising either from the new policy; &/or changes to their personal circumstances since the last review. In addition, the FAB officer will support the carer to claim any benefits that they may be eligible for.

- 9.5 In order to complete the reviews within 10-12 weeks, additional temporary staffing resources will be recruited to undertake the reviews in addition to the existing officers.
- 9.6 It is proposed that the policy is effective from the 9th April 2017. The FAB team will begin the reviews in March, following publication by the Department for Work and Pensions of the annual update to the personal allowance rates.
- 9.7 Whilst assessments may be completed in March, payments will only begin under the new policy from 9th April 2017. The outcome of any assessment reviews will apply prospectively, from the latter of the 9th April 2017 or the Sunday following the date of the assessment. Any assessments undertaken will not be backdated.

10. Reasons for recommendations

The Cabinet Member is recommended to approve the Financial Support and Assessment Policy attached at Appendix 1, in order to ensure that there is a fair and transparent means testing assessment policy in place for carers in receipt of financial support, which reflects latest guidance and aligns the means testing process across both Adult and Children's Services.

11. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

A Preliminary Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out (Appendix 3). From this it has been determined that a Full EIA is not required as the recommendations do not have a potential negative impact on any of the protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010. The main points that were highlighted from the preliminary EIA were.

- Portsmouth City Council already applies a means tested approach to financial support, this revised approach is to bring it in line with Adult Assessments and ensure transparent and equitable approach to all families requiring financial support looking after Portsmouth's vulnerable children.

Further mitigating factors are as follows:

- Every family affected by this proposed change has already been assessed by Children's Services and will be re-assessed at appropriate periods. Every family will be visited from our Financial Assessment and Benefits

(FAB) staff to explain in detail how these changes will affect them individually. At those visits the FAB staff:

- Act on behalf of the City Council as a whole to identify any problems or opportunities and either signpost clients to appropriate services or call on the necessary services as needed.
 - Identify and claim any benefits or other income that the client may be entitled to, including making the claims on their behalf for benefits administered by the City Council and other agencies such as the Department of Work & Pensions.
 - Calculate how much financial support they are entitled to, using accurate up to date figures and ensuring a clear comparison between assessment processes is detailed and evidenced to show the financial impact for them.
- Additionally, transitional protection arrangements will be put in place, for a period of time after the implementation of this new policy, to mitigate the impact for those carers whose new assessment would lead to a reduction in their weekly level of financial support. This will allow carers time to adjust to the new levels of weekly financial support.

12. Legal comments

The policy is lawful. Councillors must have the opportunity to scrutinise the policy before it is approved and the member decision should be recorded in writing.

13. Finance comments

- 13.1 The means testing assessment policy attached at Appendix 1, has been updated and revised to ensure consistency, fairness, transparency as well as compliance with the relevant regulations and guidance.
- 13.2 In order to quantify the potential financial impact of the new means testing assessment policy, a sample of 43 (20%) payments were selected from across the different types of care orders; based on the payments made in May 2016. A desk based assessment was undertaken to determine the impact on the level of financial support payable; if the new assessment process had been applied. The results of the financial modelling have been explained within the body of the report and indicate that the proposals can be accommodated within existing budget levels.
- 13.3 Where former foster carers had not previously been means tested, it has not been possible to complete a desk based review. Additionally, the FAB team do not currently collect information in respect of savings or

capital and therefore it has not been possible to determine at this stage how many carer(s) may be affected by this policy change.

- 13.4 The financial modelling has not been able to reflect specific individual arrangements and commitments which may have been entered into with carers, which may override the application of this policy
- 13.5 It is recognised that following the introduction of the new means test assessment policy, the level of financial support payable to some carers may be reduced; particularly where fall they within the new capital/savings thresholds or where the previous means test assessment process had not been applied. Therefore transitional protection arrangements have been proposed to mitigate the impact on carers and allow them time to adjust to the new levels of weekly financial support.

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Signed by:

Sarah Newman
Deputy Director of Children's Services - Children's Social Care

.....
Signed by:

Chris Ward
Director of Finance & Information Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Means Testing Assessment Policy for Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangements and Residence Orders.

Appendix 2 - DWP proposed rates for 2017-18

Appendix 3 - Preliminary Equality Impact Assessment

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
The Children's Act 1989 (as amended) The Special Guardianship Regulations 2005	www.legislation.gov.uk

The Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005	
The Children's and Families Act 2014	
The Special Guardianship Guidance issued by the Department for Educational and Skills	www.gov.uk
The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014	www.legislation.gov.uk

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

MEANS TESTING ASSESSMENT
POLICY

FOR

ADOPTION, SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP,
CHILD ARRANGEMENT AND RESIDENCE ORDERS

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Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Procedure Reference:	CFAB1
Title:	Means Testing Assessment for Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement and Residence Orders.
Date of Issue	20 th February 2017
Effective Date:	9 th April 2017
Sector:	Resources [FN]
Issuing Officer:	Kelly Redman Team Leader – Financial Assessments, Income and Recovery
Contact:	Kelly Redman Team Leader – Financial Assessments, Income and Recovery 023 9268 8090
Remarks:	See also: Department of Education and Skills – standardised means testing module. The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014.
Distribution:	As below
Signed:	
Date of next Review	April 2018

Distribution	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children's Social Care and Safeguarding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kate Freeman - Head of Looked After Children Services Sarah Newman - Deputy Director - Social Care & Safeguarding Susan Aistrophe – Finance Manager Health and Adult Social Care Richard Webb – Finance Manager Education & Children & Regulatory Services

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MEANS TESTING FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT - ADOPTION, SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP, CHILD ARRANGEMENT ORDER OR RESIDENCE ORDER

Definitions:

Carer(s) – this term relates to the carer/guardian of the child subject to the Order.

Looked after child(ren) – refers to the status of the child(ren) whilst in Foster Care before becoming subject to an Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement or Residence Order.

Household – refers to the parent/carers/guardian, spouse/partner and any dependent children residing in the same home.

Context:

This document should be read in conjunction with the:

- Children's Act 1989 (as amended);
- Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005;
- Special Guardianship Regulations 2005; and
- Portsmouth City Council's policies

that set out the circumstances when the Council may provide financial support.

Financial support will be considered by Portsmouth City Council for the purpose of supporting the ongoing placement of the child subject to the relevant order.

Introduction:

All carers subject to an Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement Order or a Residence Order will require a full means tested financial assessment as outlined in this policy. For the purpose of this policy Portsmouth City Council has applied principles from the standardised means test model – as issued by the Department for Education and Skills, and The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014. This is to ensure continuity across services within Portsmouth City Council and to ensure the assessment process is a fair and transparent model when assessing financial support for families.

Financial Support:

The Council has no specific duty to carry out financial assessments for financial support where the child is not looked after or was not looked after immediately prior to the making of the relevant order. However, it is likely that an assessment will be required in cases where the Council has been influential in the arrangements for making the placement and in the plan for seeking an order.

In these cases, financial support may be appropriate either as a one off payment to assist with making the placement (such as help with legal fees) or as ongoing support. Regular payments in these cases may only be made with the approval of the Head of Looked After Children Services.

Regular payments agreed in these circumstances are subject to the means tested assessment process set out within this document to determine the level of need for financial support payable. The level of financial support will be based (prior to the means test assessment) on relevant approved age related allowance.

The means testing assessment process set out within this document **must not** be applied by the Council when consideration is being given to providing financial support in respect of:

- the legal costs (including court fees) of making an application to court in respect of a looked after child where the local authority is in support of the application;
- legal and court costs involved in varying or discharging an order made in respect of a child previously looked after; or
- expenditure for the purpose of introducing an agency adoptive child to their adoptive parent.

Cases will need to be judged on the situation at the time and an arrangement made with the special guardian to confirm the local authority's contribution. No commitment to providing financial support in these circumstances can be made without first discussing the case with the Head of Looked After Children Services

The means testing assessment process will also not be applied to former foster carers to whom the two year transitional protection period under the Special Guardianship Regulations 2005 or Adoption Support Services Regulations 2005 applies.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services - Safeguarding may dis-apply the means testing assessment process for a carer; where the application of the assessment would result in additional costs to the Council

Referral:

All referrals must be made to the Financial Assessments and Benefits (FAB) team by Social Care – Children's Social Care and Safeguarding and authorised by the referring Social Worker's Manager. Referrals should be made via the internal e-form available on the Intranet which will send the referral information directly to the shared email account FSU.Adoption@portsmouthcc.gov.uk. Referrals should be made immediately as soon as the intention to apply for Adoption Order, Special Guardianship Order, Child Arrangement or Residence Order is established. Referrals should only be made following a completed needs assessment of the child.

Failure to refer within a timely fashion may delay court proceedings as a financial statement is required prior to the Order being granted. The carer is

entitled to 28 days' notice of the proposed support plan and financial assessment.

Subsequent notification is also required from the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Team as to when the Order was granted to ensure the FAB officer can re-visit the family to support them through any welfare benefit application and to validate the preliminary financial assessment.

Financial Assessment:

NO financial support payment will be made if:

1. The carer(s) have savings, of £23,250.00 (single) or of £46,500.00 (joint) in line with the Care Act 2014 single charging framework. This ensures consistency across all Social Care policies where financial assistance is requested i.e. Non-Residential Services, Residential Services, Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement and Residence Order.
2. The carer(s) own a second property (other than the home they reside in).
3. The carer(s) choose not to disclose all details of their financial circumstances.

The financial assessment takes a holistic approach to the household's financial circumstances in order to ensure a fair financial assessment for the provision of financial support. This should, in all cases where reasonable and practicable to do so, be carried out in person with the carer(s) by the Financial Assessments and Benefits (FAB) Officer for Children's Services.

The FAB officer initially will complete two assessments:

- A Preliminary assessment (prepared for the Court Hearing) based on assumed income (based on a full welfare benefit assessment identifying benefit/tax credit entitlement once the order is granted).
- A validation assessment once the order is granted and all benefits/tax credits are claimed.

Portsmouth City Council will take the household's income/benefits/tax credits and any tariff income from savings/capital, deduct any allowable expenses and a personal allowance (Income support plus 25%) - In line with The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014. This will arrive at a figure called the **Net Residual Income**.

The purpose of the financial assessment is to determine whether a carer(s) have a sufficient level of net residual income in order to maintain a reasonable standard of living within which to support the child or children.

The **Net Residual Income** figure is used to:

- 1. Determine whether or not financial support may be granted.**
- 2. Calculate the level of that financial support.**

If the Net Residual Income is equal to or less than the personal allowance (as set by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), reviewed annually) then the full value of financial support will be payable.

For every £1.00 of Net Residual income over the personal allowance rate, £1.00 is deducted from the relevant amount of eligible financial support. Any benefits claimed in respect of the child will then be deducted from the remaining amount.

Income (See Appendix 1):

The items to be taken into consideration are set out in Appendix 1. Any income not shown is to be taken fully into account unless there appears to be exceptional reasons why it should be excluded. Where there is any doubt, The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014 principles should be followed – or referred to the Financial Assessments, Income and Recovery Team Leader for a decision.

- Earned income should be the net figure after deducting Income Tax, National Insurance and contributions to occupational pension schemes. Where pension contributions have been deducted from income, they should not also be included under “Expenses”.
- Income for self-employed persons is taken as profits, as per the most recent year’s accounts, which have been recognised by HMRC. In order to assess on this basis, the Inland Revenue net assessment should be received along with any details of contributions to pension schemes.
- Any financial resources of the child to be placed must also be included – such as maintenance payments.
- Income from Boarders/Lodgers/other non-dependants living in the household - £20.00 will be disregarded then 50% of the remainder will be taken into account for the financial assessment (in line with DWP rulings for income).

Benefits/Tax Credits (See Appendix 1):

The items to be taken into consideration are set out in Appendix 1. The list of benefits/tax credits reflects the more common, but is not an exhaustive list. For any benefit not shown, The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014 principles should be followed.

- Working tax credit and Child Tax credits
 - Housing Benefit will be shown as a deduction from housing costs under “Expenses”, rather than as income.
 - Welfare benefits payable by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
 - Child Benefit.
-
- Preliminary assessments will be calculated on benefits/income that the carer is entitled to receive. The list of income items reflects the more common incomes/benefits/tax credits, but is not an exhaustive list.
 - All income/benefits/tax credits will need to be evidenced and verified by the FAB officer. Carer(s) will be required to sign a declaration that the information given is true and that they agree to inform the FAB officer at the

earliest opportunity of any changes in their circumstances to avoid overpayment of financial support.

Savings/Capital:

In assessing savings and other capital, the following should be disregarded:

- The value of a carer's main home
- Capital less than the lower capital threshold (£14,250.00 Single, £28,500.00 Joint) as set out in The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014.

For definitions of capital and more detailed advice, The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014 should be referred to.

Tariff Income (assumed weekly income from capital):

Where savings/capital held is more than the lower capital level (£14,250.00 Single, £28,500.00 Joint) but less than the higher capital level (£23,250.00 Single or £46,500.00 Joint), a tariff weekly income of £1 for every complete or part of £250 over the lower capital level should be taken into account. Where capital exceeds the upper threshold then no financial support will be granted.

Example:

Single Person =	£17,856.31
Minus lower Capital Level	£14,250.00

= Savings to apply tariff	£3,606.31
---------------------------	-----------

Tariff = £3,606.31 / £250.00 = £14.00 per week tariff income

Personal Allowance (See Appendix 2):

To ensure that the household has adequate financial resources, a personal allowance will be applied (according the households specific circumstances) and off set against the Income/benefits/tariff income that have been taken into account for the financial assessment:

- Basic Income Support levels (Applicable amount plus age-related premiums, dependent children premiums and family premiums and disability-related premiums).
- A 25% buffer on this sum in line with The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014

Expenses:

- Contributions to Private Pension Plans (not already deducted from income).
- Payments to dependent children not living in the household.

- Special needs-related expenditure in respect of the child – expenses to be evidenced.

One-off and lump sum expenses:

The Adoption Regulations (2005) list the following costs, which must be taken into consideration when assessing the needs of the adoptive parent(s):

- Costs associated with introducing the child to the adoptive parent(s).
- Initial expenditure necessary to accommodate the child, such as furniture and fittings, alterations and adaptations, means of transport.
- Legal costs and court fees
- Damage to property and equipment caused by the child
- Boarding school placement due to special needs
- Travel visits between the child and related persons

Some of these items could well feature as ongoing costs requiring regular payment, but others may require single lump sums or a series of payments – the FAB officer will calculate the period in which these assessments relate and re-assess once the period has expired if these costs are no longer incurred.

All costs will be calculated into a weekly figure for the purpose of the financial assessment.

Housing Costs:

- Housing Costs: Rent (net of Housing Benefit), Mortgage (plus endowments), Service Charges i.e. communal charges in sheltered/flat accommodation for services like gardening which are not payable through housing benefits, Council Tax (Net of Council Tax Benefit).
- House Buildings insurance – Allowance to be made for building insurance only, not house contents insurance.

Expenses which are considered normal living costs, such as water charges, food, clothing and fuel costs, should not be included as an expense for the purpose of the financial assessment, as these costs should be met through the personal allowance (income support plus 25%).

Mortgages:

The full weekly value of the mortgage will be included in the assessment of housing costs. This includes any amount payable for the insurance element of an endowment mortgage. If increased payments are being made to reduce the term of their mortgage, then the additional payments will not be allowed except where there is no alternative but to pay these increased charges.

Service Charges:

An allowance may be made for service charges that must be paid under the terms of the lease and which relate to the provision of adequate accommodation. Accordingly, an allowance may be given for items such as management fees, insurance, repairs and the cleaning of communal areas.

However there may be some types of charges included in rental agreements where an allowance should not be made, such as items that can be considered normal day-to-day living expenses e.g. heating, laundry or meals – the FAB officer will explore this fully.

An allowance for eligible service charges should only be considered if Housing Benefit or a Supporting People grant does not already cover them.

The Financial Support Calculation:

The Net Residual Income figure is calculated by deducting eligible items of expenditure from the total relevant household income/benefits. The actual weekly financial support payment is calculated as follows:

1. Take the maximum weekly relevant financial support figure to which the means testing assessment is being applied.
2. Deduct pound for pound any Net Residual Income from the maximum weekly financial support figure
3. Difference = The maximum financial support allowable
4. Deduct any benefits claimed in respect of child.

Rounding:

When any calculation in the assessment results in a fraction of a penny, the FAB officer will round to the nearest penny.

Final Calculation:

The Financial Assessment calculation sheet prepared by the FAB Officer will be signed and dated by the FAB Officer as a completed assessment. A 10% quality assurance check will be made of the completed assessments, by the Financial Assessments, Income and Recovery Team Leader on a monthly basis, to ensure the accuracy of the assessments and welfare benefit identification.

The Carer(s) will be asked to sign a declaration (see Appendix 4) that the information given is true to the best of their knowledge and they understand that any change of circumstances must be reported; as any changes will be backdated to the Sunday following the date of change which may result in overpayment of financial support. Please see Appendix 3 – Financial Assessment Statement of Financial Circumstances.

A copy of the calculation sheet for the final assessment should be sent to the Children's Finance Team - Payments Officer by the FAB Officer for the resulting financial support calculation to be used.

Welfare Benefits advice:

The Financial Assessments and Benefits Team are Welfare Benefits trained and are accredited by the Department for Work and Pensions to support individuals through the application and verification stage. The Financial Assessments and Benefits Team when completing the financial assessment will complete a full welfare benefits check to ensure all entitlements are claimed maximising household income. Should benefit entitlement be identified a second visit may be required to support the client through the application stage, if this is required, the appointment will be arranged at the initial visit and details left with the client.

Any Welfare Benefits claimed and awarded will then be included within the financial assessment as appropriate. The new financial assessment will commence from the Monday following the date of benefit award.

Reviews:

The FAB team will review all Financial Support cases annually in line with the DWP benefit/pension increases.

For carer(s) only in receipt of Benefits/Pensions this will consist of a review being completed “in office” based on the new figures released by the DWP – any inflationary percentage increases will also be in line with DWP specifications. A new assessment calculation sheet will be sent and the Carer(s) asked to check that the figures used are correct – any omissions are to be evidenced and the assessment will be amended to reflect this.

For Carer(s) working or in receipt of Tax Credits, initial contact will be made in writing at the beginning of the financial year giving a three month period to collate wage slips and any new award letters. As these assessments are slightly more complex these review assessments will be completed in person with the Carer(s).

All Carer(s) will be asked to sign a new declaration (see Appendix 4) agreeing to the new financial assessment – review declarations will also ask the Carer(s) to confirm the child is still resident.

Re-assessments and appeals:

Reassessment's can be requested at any time, whether this is due to a change in circumstances or if it is felt that the original assessment was incorrect.

Applications for reassessment should be made direct to the Financial Assessments, Income and Recovery Team Leader and can be made in writing or via telephone.

Upon receipt of the reassessment request, the Team Leader will co-ordinate a reassessment. A second appointment may be required if there is not enough information held on file. The client will be contacted to arrange a convenient date and time if this is applicable.

The reassessment will not be completed by the same person who completed the initial assessment and the outcome will be confirmed in writing to the carer(s) explaining either:

- That the Final Assessment calculation has changed – giving reasons as to why this change has occurred.
- Or
- That the Financial Assessment remains unchanged and why.

Complaints:

If after a reassessment has been completed a carer(s) remains dissatisfied with their financial assessment, they have the right to make a formal complaint. This can be done via Social Care's Comments and Complaints team.

All complaints are investigated on their own merit and a formal response will be made in writing to their complaint within 10 working days. If this response is does not resolve the complaint then they can progress to stage 2 of Portsmouth City Council's complaints procedure which can be found on the website www.portsmouthcc.gov.uk.

Financial Support End:

Financial Support ceases to be payable when the earlier of the following events occur:

- The child ceases to live with their Adoptive Parent(s), Special Guardian, Child Arrangement or Residence Order holder and this is regarded as a permanent departure. Temporary absences do not apply, e.g. boarding school, hospital, and respite care.
- The child ceases full-time education or training and commences employment.
- The child qualifies for Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance in their own right.
- Where the Child Arrangement Order, Residence Order, Adoption or Special Guardianship ceases.
- The child attains the age of 18 unless they continue in full-time education or training, when it may continue until the end of the course or training he is then undertaking.

or

- Any other condition placed by Portsmouth City Council on the financial support, is triggered.

Overpayments:

An overpayment may occur as a result of changes of financial circumstances for the carer(s). Portsmouth City Council will re-assess following notification of any change of circumstances and this new assessment will be active with effect from the Sunday following date of change.

It is the carer(s) responsibility to inform Portsmouth City Council of any change in their circumstances as outlined in the Statement of Financial Circumstances Declaration.

Upon receipt of notification of change, the FAB officer will re-assess based on the information provided and complete a new Assessment Calculation sheet. A copy of this is then sent to the carer(s) with a new declaration which is to be signed and returned as acceptance of the new financial assessment.

A further copy of the calculation sheet will be sent to the Children's Finance Team. Where an overpayment occurs, the Children's Finance team will notify the Carer(s) outlining the overpayment and detailing how it will be recovered. Notification of the overpayment will also be sent to the Children's Social Care service.

Where a carer is in receipt of future ongoing payments:

- i. If the overpayment equates to 3 nights or less of their continuing standard weekly payment amount, then the overpayment will be recovered in full from the following weeks payment.
- ii. If the overpayment equates to 4 nights or more, then the overpayment will be recovered in weekly instalments up to maximum of 3/7ths of standard weekly payment, for a maximum of 8 weeks.
- iii. If the overpayment exceeds the thresholds in i or ii above, then an invoice will be raised to recover the overpayment.

Where the carer is no longer in receipt of future ongoing payments, an invoice will be raised to recover the overpayment.

If the carer cannot repay the invoice within 28 days, a Credit Control Officer can be assigned – contact will be made with carer(s) and an affordable re-payment plan will be devised.

The credit control team will monitor the re-payment and take further recovery action where agreed arrangements are not maintained; this may include legal action to recover funds.

Suspension of Financial Support:

Financial Support may be suspended if:

1. The recipient has failed to notify Portsmouth City Council of any of the changes of circumstances as specified in the Statement of Financial Circumstances.

The Head of Looked After Children Services will determine what action should be taken. There may be circumstances where it appears that fraud has taken place and consultations should take place with a senior manager as to whether the Police should be involved.

2. The recipient has not responded to a request for information required as part of the review.

Any correspondence from the Financial Assessments and Benefits Team requesting information for a review will include a notice that the payment will be suspended 28 days from the date of posting unless the recipient makes contact. The Head of Looked After Children Services will be informed if contact has not been made and a decision will subsequently be made as to whether suspension is appropriate.

The recipient will be informed in writing when the ongoing payment is suspended. They may appeal against this decision to the Head of Looked After Children Services. The recipients have 10 working days from the date of the letter informing them of the suspension to make any appeal. The response to their appeal will be made in writing and will be the final decision.

Where a decision is made to reinstate an ongoing payment the recipient will be notified in writing by the Head of Looked After Children Services. "Back payments" to cover the period of suspension will not be made unless it can be shown that the local authority acted in error in making the suspension.

Treatment of Financial Assessment Components:

Description:	Taken into Account:	Notes:
<i>Income</i>		
Earnings (salary/wages/maternity)	Yes – Weekly Value	Self employed – will be Net figure.
Statutory Sick pay	Yes – Weekly Value	
Statutory Maternity Pay	Yes – Weekly Value	
Annuity Income	Yes – Weekly Value	
Occupational Pensions	Yes – Weekly Value	
Private Pensions	Yes – Weekly Value	
Income from Boarder/ Lodger/other non- dependant in property	Yes – Weekly Value	£20.00 disregard – then 50% of remainder taken into account
Maintenance or Separation Order	Yes – Weekly Value	
Tariff Income from Capital/Savings	Yes – Weekly Value	£1.00 for every £250.00 over lower threshold limit as per Care Act.
<i>Benefits/Tax Credits</i>		
Income Support (inc. all premiums)	Yes – Weekly Value	
Employment Support Allowance	Yes – Weekly Value	
Incapacity Benefit	Yes – Weekly Value	
Retirement Pension	Yes – Weekly Value	
Working Tax Credit	Yes – Weekly Value	
Child Tax Credit	Yes – Weekly Value	
Child Benefit	Yes – Weekly Value	
Bereavement Allowance	Yes – Weekly Value	
Pension Credit	Yes – Weekly Value	
War Pensions	Yes – Weekly Value	

Personal Allowance: * Rates Increase Annually in April (DWP).

Basic Income Support Personal Allowance (DWP): *Each individual component is added together and then an additional 25% is added as per Department of Health's Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014:*

Personal Allowances

single

under 25

£57.90

25 or over

£73.10

lone parent

18 or over

£73.10

couple

both under 18 - assessment phase

£87.50

Both under 18 - Main phase

£114.85

one under 18, one under 25

£57.90

one under 18, one 25 and over

£73.10

both 18 or over

£114.85

dependent children

Child Premium

£66.90

Family Premium

£17.45

Disabled Child

£60.06

Disabled enhanced (child high rate DLA)

£24.43

pensioner (applies to couples only)

£116.00

disability

single

£32.25

couple

£45.95

enhanced disability

single

£15.75

couple

£22.60

severe disability

single

£61.85

couple (one qualify)

£61.85

couple (both qualify)

£123.70



Statement of Financial Circumstances:
Financial Support – Adoption, Special Guardianship, Residence Order:

Do you have Capital/Savings in excess of £23,250.00 (single), £46,500.00 (couple)?
Yes/No

CARER NAME		PARTNER NAME	
SWIFT NUMBER		SWIFT NUMBER	
Address		Address	
National Ins. No		National Ins. No	
Contact Number		Contact Number	
CHILD DETAILS			
Name(s)		SWIFT NUMBER	
Date of Birth			
Name(s)		SWIFT NUMBER	
Date of Birth			
Name(s)		SWIFT NUMBER	
Date of Birth			
Name(s)		SWIFT NUMBER	
Date of Birth			

Do you own any other property land apart from that in which you reside? Yes/No

Do you wish to be financially assessed? Yes/No

INCOME:					
Income Type	Paid to	Amount	Frequency	Weekly Value for assessment	Verified Y/N Office use only
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
CLIENTS TOTAL WEEKLY INCOME				£	
PARTNERS TOTAL WEEKLY INCOME				£	
TOTAL WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME (FOR FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT)				£	

BENEFITS/TAX CREDITS					
Benefit Type	Paid to	Amount	Frequency	Weekly Value for assessment	Verified Y/N Office use only
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£		£	
CLIENTS TOTAL WEEKLY INCOME FROM BENEFITS				£	
PARTNERS TOTAL WEEKLY INCOME FROM BENEFITS				£	
TOTAL WEEKLY BENEFITS (FOR FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT)				£	
AMOUNT OF INCOME TO BE USED IN FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT =				£	

SAVINGS, CAPITAL AND INVESTMENTS:					
Type of Capital/Savings/Investments	Account Number (Last 4 digits)	Owned by (if joint account please tick both)	Amount	Amount taken into consideration (office use only)	Verified Y/N (office use only)
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
		Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/>	£	£	
TOTAL CAPITAL / INVESTMENTS				£	
TOTAL AMOUNT DISREGARDED				£	
AMOUNT OF TARIFF INCOME				£	

HOUSING COSTS:					
Expense incurred	Paid to	Reference (if known)	Amount	Amount taken into consideration (office use only)	Verified Y/N (office use only)
Buildings Insurance			£	£	
Service Charge			£	£	
Ground Rent			£	£	
Mortgage			£	£	
Rent (minus benefit)			£	£	
Council Tax (minus Benefit)			£	£	
TOTAL HOUSING COSTS				£	

EXPENSES:						
Expense incurred	Who is this for (if for both please tick both)	Paid to / Purchased from	Frequency	Amount	Amount taken into account (office use only)	Verified Y/N (office use only)
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	

	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
	Client <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Child <input type="checkbox"/>			£	£	
TOTAL ALLOWABLE EXPENSES				£	£	



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Financial Assessment Declaration:

Financial Support – Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement or Residence Order

The information given to the Financial Assessments and Benefits Team to complete this Financial Assessment is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and I agree to inform Portsmouth City Council of any changes to my circumstances including Income/Benefits, Expenses, Capital and Accommodation.

I/We have been given a full explanation of how this assessment has been calculated and fully accept and understand the level of financial support applicable, as outlined in the Financial Assessment.

I/We also understand that if I/We are awarded any additional welfare benefits, or if my financial situation should change this Financial Assessment will be affected, I understand that any such changes will be backdated to the Monday following date of change.

I understand that Portsmouth City Council will re-assess my financial support annually in line with the increases in Benefits/Pensions as defined by the Department for Works and Pensions. I understand this assessment will be completed in office using information available, and that it will be my responsibility to check the financial information used in this assessment and advise Portsmouth City Council of any omissions.

Failure to inform Portsmouth City Council of any changes in my/our circumstances or any omissions may result in an overpayment of financial support which may be recovered from ongoing payments at a maximum rate of three seventh's of my weekly support (*other arrangements to be agreed).

This authority is under a duty to protect the public funds it administers, and to this end may use the information you have provided on this form for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies responsible for auditing or administering public funds for these purposes.

For further information go to www.portsmouth.gov.uk and search for 'National Fraud Initiative'.

Signature

Carer(s): _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix 2 - DWP Proposed Basic Income Support Personal Allowances 2017-18

<i>personal allowances</i>	Value
<i>single</i>	
under 25	£57.90
25 or over	£73.10
<i>lone parent</i>	
under 18	£57.90
18 or over	£73.10
<i>couple</i>	
both under 18	£57.90
both under 18-higher rate	£87.50
one under 18, one under 25	£57.90
one under 18, one 25 and over	£73.10
both 18 or over	£114.85
<i>dependent children</i>	
child premium	£66.90
family premium	£17.45
disabled child	£60.90
disabled enhanced (child high rate DLA)	£24.78
pensioner (applies to couples only)	£128.40
<i>disability</i>	
single	£32.55
couple	£46.40
<i>enhanced disability</i>	
single	£15.90
couple	£22.85
<i>severe disability</i>	
single	£62.45
couple (one qualify))	£62.45
couple (both qualify)	£124.90
carer	£34.95

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Equality Impact Assessment

Preliminary assessment form v5 / 2013

www.portsmouth.gov.uk

The preliminary impact assessment is a quick and easy screening process. It should:

- identify those policies, projects, services, functions or strategies which require a full EIA by looking at:
 - negative, positive or no impact on any of the equality groups
 - opportunity to promote equality for the equality groups
 - data / feedback
- prioritise if and when a full EIA should be completed
- justify reasons for why a full EIA is not going to be completed

Directorate:

Director of Children's social care

**Function e.g. HR,
IS, carers:**

Financial Assessment & Benefits

Title of policy, service, function, project or strategy (new or old) :

Means Testing Assessment Policy for Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement & Residence Orders

Type of policy, service, function, project or strategy:

☐

Existing

☐

New / proposed

☒

Changed

Q1 - What is the aim of your policy, service, function, project or strategy?

The current financial support and assessment processes applied by the Financial Assessments and Benefits (FAB) team, on behalf of Children's Social Care, have not been reviewed or updated for a number of years. The current assessment processes are complicated and have developed and evolved with the different care orders. The current means testing assessments processes applied by the FAB team are also not consistent with those that they apply to Adult Services; as the Children's assessments exclude capital thresholds.

The proposed means testing assessment policy has been updated and revised to ensure consistency, fairness, transparency as well as compliance with the relevant regulations and guidance. For the purpose of this policy the Council has applied principles from the standardised means test model - as issued by the Department for Education Skills and The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014; which is consistent with the process applied in Adult Services.

Q2 - Who is this policy, service, function, project or strategy going to benefit or have a detrimental effect on and how?

The proposed means testing assessment policy will apply to all carers subject to an Adoption Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement or Residence Order who are eligible to receive financial support from the Council.

The proposed policy seeks to ensure that financial support is awarded to those most in need and will benefit the families caring for children under one of the above types of care order.

Q3 - Thinking about each group below, does, or could the policy, service, function, project or strategy have a negative impact on members of the equality groups below?

Group	Negative	Positive / no impact	Unclear
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other excluded groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----------------------	--------------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------

If the answer is "negative" or "unclear" consider doing a full EIA

Q4 - Does, or could the policy, service, function, project or strategy help to promote equality for members of the equality groups?

Group	Yes	No	Unclear
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy or maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other excluded groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the answer is "no" or "unclear" consider doing a full EIA

Q5 - Do you have any feedback data from the equality groups that influences, affects or shapes this policy, service, function, project or strategy?

Group	Yes	No	Unclear
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transgender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other excluded groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the answer is "no" or "unclear" consider doing a full EIA

Q6 - Using the assessments in questions 3, 4 and 5 should a full assessment be carried out on this policy, service, function or strategy?

☐ yes ☒ No

Q7 - How have you come to this decision?

The proposed means testing assessment policy has been updated and revised to ensure consistency fairness, transparency as well as compliance with the relevant regulations and guidance. For the purpose of this policy the Council has applied principles from the standardised means test model - as issued by the Department for Education Skills and The Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) Regulations 2014; which is consistent with the process applied in Adult Services.

Portsmouth City Council already applies a means tested approach to financial support, this revised approach is to bring it in line with Adult Assessments and ensure transparent and equitable approach to all families requiring financial support looking after Portsmouth's vulnerable children.

Further mitigating factors are as follows:

Every family affected by this proposed change has already been assessed by Children's Services and will be re-assessed at appropriate periods. Every family will be visited from our Financial Assessment and Benefits (FAB) staff to explain in detail how these changes will affect them individually. At those visits the FAB staff:

- Act on behalf of the City Council as a whole to identify any problems or opportunities and either signpost clients to appropriate services or call on the necessary services as needed.
- Identify and claim any benefits or other income that the client may be entitled to, including making the claims on their behalf for benefits administered by the City Council and other agencies such as the Department of Work & Pensions.
- Calculate how much financial support they are entitled to, using accurate up to date figures and ensuring a clear comparison between assessment processes is detailed and evidenced to show the financial impact for them.

Additionally, transitional protection arrangements will be put in place, for a period of time after the implementation of this new policy, to mitigate the impact for those carers whose new assessment would lead to a reduction in their weekly level of financial support. This will allow them time to adjust to the new levels of weekly financial support.

If you have to complete a full EIA please contact the Equalities and diversity team if you require help
Tel: 023 9283 4789 or email: equalities@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

Q8 - Who was involved in the EIA?

Richard Webb, Finance Manager Education, Children & Regulatory Services
Kelly Redman, Team Lead - Financial Assessments, Income and Recovery

This EIA has been approved by: Sarah Newman

Contact number: x1161

Date: 07/02/2017

Please email a copy of your completed EIA to the Equality and diversity team. We will contact you with any comments or queries about your preliminary EIA.

Telephone: 023 9283 4789

Email: equalities@portsmouthcc.gov.uk

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