

## **PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL - CHILDREN & FAMILIES SERVICES**

<b>Document title</b>	<b>Portsmouth City Council Adaptation of Homes Policy for foster Families and Special guardianship (assessed by PCC)</b>
<b>Document description</b>	<b>This policy sets out the criteria for the provision for funding for Local Authority foster carers and special guardianship(as assessed by PCC) to extend or convert their homes in order to offer a wider range or number of placements to Portsmouth children in care or a permanent placement for a specific child.</b>
<b>Document date</b>	<b>June 2019</b>

### **Principles**

- Wherever possible children should be able to live in a stable family-based setting for the duration of their childhood with any siblings, and placement moves should be minimal.
- To be equitable regardless of placement type,
- To use public funds responsibly and fairly.
- To be fair and transparent.

### **Framework of the policy**

To provide financial support towards property enhancements that facilitates the continual or new placement of PCC children in suitable foster care.

To provide extra capacity for existing PCC carers that may avoid what would otherwise be a more expensive alternative placement.

The expansion of accommodation in homes of qualifying foster households. (Including increasing the number of placements offered by any one household)

To retain an existing placement where the property is deemed unfit or unsuitable for long-term provision.

To secure long term/permanent placements for specific children.

To secure permanence for sibling groups.

To meet the needs of children with disabilities.

To meet health and safety requirements, which otherwise might result in a child/children being moved.

Subject to finance availability.

All work will be commissioned and contract managed by Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings Services on behalf of Children, Families and Education Directorate.

### **Scope of the policy**

The policy covers all requests for home extensions and adaptations for Portsmouth City Council foster carers/special guardianship who own their own home (via a mortgage or outright ownership).

This policy does not cover families who rent their property.

This policy sits alongside the existing process for specific adaptations for disabled children via Private Sector Housing, Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process.

Payments made by the council are discretionary and not an entitlement. The decision of the Council is final and there is no process for appeal.

Financial contributions for extensions/adaptations may result in the council placing a legal mortgage on the carer's property. Carers must be made aware of this at the outset of any discussions, as their current lender may not consent to a second mortgage being secured on the property.

Should the loan be greater than £20,000 as part of the approval process the council will assess whether there is sufficient equity in the property (taking account of any existing mortgage) to cover the cost of the loan.

## **Criteria**

- Carers must be approved by Portsmouth City Council's Fostering Panel for the current or proposed placement(s).
- Carers must have at least 1 year post approval experience with no safeguarding or standard of care issues.
- Exceptions relating to Special Guardianship placements will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Carers must have the skill set and capacity to care for a specific child(ren).
- Carers must be homeowners.
- This meets requirements of the child's care plan.
- This would provide a long term/permanent placement not otherwise possible.
- To support building adaptations for extra living space, bedroom, and/or specialist furniture/equipment to be used.

## **Conditions**

Should, for any reason, this placement availability be withdrawn by the carer within a period of 5 years following the provision of funds the foster carer will be liable to repay a proportion of the grant received to the Council as follows :

- 1<sup>st</sup> years 100% repayable
- 2<sup>nd</sup> year 80% repayable
- 3<sup>rd</sup> year 60% repayable
- 4<sup>th</sup> year 40% repayable
- 5<sup>th</sup> year 20% repayable.

A business case will accompany each request for funding, delegation is given to the Finance Manager Children and Families Services to approve, authorisation will also be required from the Director of Children, Families and Education.

The business case must demonstrate that all other funding sources have been explored.

The accompanying financial appraisal should demonstrate payback/equivalent savings of the sum invested within 3 years.

### **Process**

- Supervising social worker has the initial discussion with carers, detailing what relevant information may be required and completes an expression of interest form. (EOI)
- Decision of request meets the eligibility criteria. (to be agreed by Team Leader)
- Service Leader approval to agree progression to formal application (this does not guarantee final approval).
- Application form is completed by the supervising social worker with input from the child(rens) social worker.
- Supervising social workers shall not make any commitment to foster carers that funding will be approved and should advise foster carer to consider all other viable options.
- Completed application and all accompanying documentation should be passed to Head of Looked after Children for signed endorsement.
- Once signed, the application is passed to the Business Partner for Children & Families Services, Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Directorate.
- On receipt of a completed application the Business Partner within Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Directorate.

will complete the following;

- Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Directorate to quote for work
- Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Directorate Surveyor to contact the family via the Social Worker for any visit
- Once the cost of the work is established the family must confirm they wish to proceed, if the work is in excess of £20,000 the family must provide a letter from their mortgage company if applicable detailing the current outstanding mortgage, approval for the works

to be undertaken and confirmation of a second mortgage on the property.

- On receipt of the above, Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings Directorate will undertake a valuation of the property taking into account the intended works.
- On receipt of the above confirmation the Business partner will to build business case for approval. This will include costs, management fee and time scale.
- On completion business partner will present the case to the Director and Finance Manager of Children, Families and Education Service.
- The outcome is to be detailed to the carer in writing by the Service Lead.
- If the loan is over £20,000 the family are to instruct their own solicitor at their cost to advise on the form of mortgage, the financial agreement contract and the building contract provided by Portsmouth City Council Legal Services.
- Once these documents are signed, dated and received by Legal Services the works can commence.

### **Decision making**

There is some expectation that carers make a contribution to the cost of the adaptation, where possible,

Examples of this - Monetary contribution

Paying for carpets or decoration by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party

Completion the internal decorations by carer family

### **Amounts up to £20,000 - If Yes**

- Financial assistance agreement and building agreement sent to carers
- Once signed work can proceed
- Finance informed.

### **If No**

- Letter to carers with reason why
- Decision logged on client record system

**Amounts over £20,000 and below £50,000-**

### **If Yes**

- A legal mortgage will be registered against the property.
- Financial assistance agreement, building agreement and mortgage sent to family
- Family to instruct solicitor
- Once signed, work can proceed
- Finance informed.

### **Approval**

All applications for funding will require approval by the Director of Children, Families and Education and the Section 151 Officer (or his delegated representative (as per the Financial Rules part 1 - 4))

- The works will then be carried out by contractors reporting to and monitored by Housing, Neighbourhood & Building Directorate, unless it is agreed separately that the carer will engage their own developer.

Carers sign up to legally binding agreement.

Legal charge on property for 5 years.

### **If No**

- Letter to carers with reason why
- Decision logged on client record system

### **Amounts over £50,000**

In addition to the requirements set out above, amounts over £50,000 will require the signed approval of the Cabinet Member for Children and Families.

### **Payments**

As Housing, Neighbourhood and Buildings Services are carrying out the work, the charge will be via an internal transfer between Children, Families and Education and Housing Neighbourhood and Buildings Services. This includes a 15% management fee to complete the work and all associated fees.