

Foster Carer Home Adaptations and Extensions Policy

Fostering and Adoption Service

June 2020

1. Introduction

This policy is applicable where a Haringey Council foster carer is considering an extension or adaptation to their property. Haringey Council may make discretionary contributions of up to £30,000 towards the extension or adaptation in circumstances where the extension or adaptation is necessary to meet the needs of looked after children.

2. General

The maximum funding which Haringey Council will consider contributing towards a foster carer's extension or adaptation is £30,000. If the cost of the building works and any other associated costs exceeds this figure, any additional costs must be funded by the foster carer. If a foster carer is interested in applying for a contribution towards the cost of an extension or adaptation, there will be a scrutiny of foster carer's request as Haringey Council requires a commitment from the foster carer to fostering for Haringey Council for a minimum of five years from the date of completion of the building works.

Haringey Council has a fixed annual budget for contributions towards extensions and adaptation works. Once the budget has been committed in a financial year, no further applications will generally be considered unless the request is to commit the following year's budget if available, or there is an immediate and urgent need.

3. Legal Framework

Section 22G of the Children Act 1989 imposes a statutory duty on local authorities to ensure that sufficient accommodation is available in their area which meets the needs of Looked After Children. In taking steps to secure sufficient accommodation, the local

authority must have regard to the benefit of having a range of accommodation and providers capable of meeting different needs. Section 22G (5) provides that accommodation providers include local authority foster carers.

The aim of this policy is to enable the local authority to increase the capacity to accommodate looked after children locally.

Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards -Standard 10 - sets out the requirements to provide suitable physical environment for a foster child. This includes the following minimum standards:

- The foster home can comfortably accommodate all who live there including, where appropriate, any suitable aids and adaptations.
- In the foster home, each child over the age of three should have their own bedroom.

4. Criteria

The foster carer must be the owner of a property within the London Borough of Haringey or within 20mile radius. Any request for adaptation or an extension must be able to satisfy one or more of the criteria below:

- To provide additional capacity to provide a home for a looked after child.
- To provide placements to children with complex needs of all age groups.
- To secure long term placements for children; or
- To enable sibling groups to be placed together or remain together.
- To be an approved foster carer with 12 months experience

The types of adaptations or extension which Haringey Council may contribute towards will depend on the presenting need. Haringey Council will consider (but not limit considerations to):

- Partition walls.
- Loft conversions; or
- Single storey extensions.

5. Approval

Where a foster carer has applied for funding towards an extension or adaptation in accordance with this policy, Haringey Council will arrange for a surveyor to inspect the

foster carer's property and assess the feasibility of options for the extension or adaptation. The Fostering & permanency Service Manager will then discuss the available options with the foster carer so that a preferred option can be agreed.

A financial and affordability assessment of the foster carer will be carried out to confirm whether the foster carer can contribute to the cost of the extension or adaptation if the total cost of the building works and associated costs might exceed the maximum contribution which Haringey Council will agree to. Land Registry searches will be carried out in relation to the foster carer's title to the property to check the legal ownership of the property and to identify any registered legal charges or restrictive covenants affecting the property. The Council will not consider contributing funding towards the extension or adaptation if the Council is not satisfied with the outcome of the Land Registry searches or the financial assessment for any reason.

If the Council is satisfied with the outcome of the financial assessment and the result of the Land Registry searches, the application will then be submitted to the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care who will consider the request and the future cost savings associated with increased capacity at the Resources Panel. There is no guarantee that the foster carer's application or the funding will be approved.

If the Fostering and permanency Service Manager refuses the application, the foster carer will be informed in writing with reasons for the application not being approved.

6. Approved Extensions / Adaptations

If funding is approved in principle at the Resources Panel, the foster carer will be notified of the approval. The foster carer must then obtain and submit to the Fostering and permanency Service within six months of approval (or other timescales which may be agreed with the Council at the Council's discretion):

- evidence of all necessary drawings, licences, permissions, and consents relating to the extension or adaptation and the proposed charge which will be registered on the foster carer's property; and
- competitive quotes including schedules of works for the proposed building works from three independent building contractors.

The Fostering & Permanency Service and the Council's surveyor will review the quotes for the building works. The Fostering & Permanency Service will decide with the foster carer which quote is best value for money taking into consideration price and quality. If the foster carer identifies a building contractor which is more expensive than other contractors or the surveyors initial estimate of cost but has the funds to pay the additional cost over £30,000, this will be taken into account and they will need to commit to providing the additional funds. However, ultimately, the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care may apply discretion regarding which contractors to appoint.

Once a decision has been taken to proceed with the building works, the foster carer will be required to enter a legally binding contract with Haringey Council before the works may commence and the first instalment of funds will be released. The foster carer will be given a reasonable amount of time to seek independent legal advice in respect of the contract before entering it.

At the time of the binding legal agreement being entered into between Haringey Council and the foster carer, a legal charge will be placed on the property owned by the foster carer at the foster carers request. This legal charge will be removed five years from the building inspection approval at the foster carer's request.

If the foster carer ceases to offer placements to looked after children prior to 5 years of the completion of the building works, then the monies will be repayable without charge of interest to Haringey Council at Haringey Council's discretion on the following basis:

Year 1 – 100%

Year 2 – 80%

Year 3 – 60%

Year 4 – 40%

Year 5 – 20%

If the foster carer moves home within 5 years of the completion of the building works but continues to offer placements to looked after children, then the legal charge may at the Council's discretion be transferred to the foster carer's new property.

The monies will not be repayable to Haringey Council in the following circumstances:

- The foster carer has had a child in placement for 5 years or more from the date on which the building works were completed.

- The foster carer has ceased to foster because they have adopted a child in placement; or
- The foster carer ceases to foster because they have obtained a child Arrangement Order or a Special Guardianship Order for a child in placement.
- At the Assistant Director for Safeguarding and Social Care's sole discretion if the foster carer has developed significant health issues and can no longer continue to offer placements to looked after children.

7. Contact Details

If you have any questions about this policy, please contact the Head of Children in Care & Placements on 020 8489 5965.