

ADAPTATIONS TO PROPERTY POLICY

Policy Description

1. This policy is applicable where foster carers, adoptive parents or Special Guardians of a child/ren on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council may be considering an adaptation to their property in connection with their role.
2. The objectives of this policy are to:
 - Increase the number of placements;
 - Provide permanence for specific looked after child/ren or young person;
 - Provide permanence for specific children / young people to whom the local authority has responsibility.
3. In order to achieve these objectives the County Council will provide grants to adapt home properties. Grants will typically be to:
 - Adapt present property to create extra room;
 - Extend present property to create extra room;
 - Assistance to buy bigger property to alleviate overcrowding or take extra children.

Principles and Commitments

- 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.

Scope of this policy

4. This policy is relevant to:
 - Foster carers;
 - Adopters;
 - Family and Friends: SGO's, Child Arrangement Orders.
5. Those eligible for support under this policy include:
 - Foster carers of County Council children;
 - Adopters of County Council children;
 - Family and friends / carers of children who are under a Care Order or subject to Care Proceedings.

Awarding Criteria

6. Any request for funding made to the County Council must satisfy at least one of the following criteria before it can be considered:

- To provide extra capacity in their home to care for another child on behalf of the County Council;
- To secure a long-term placement for a child already in their care;
- To enable sibling groups for whom they are caring to remain together;
- To meet the needs of a child with multiple disabilities in their care;
- To meet certain health and safety requirements, which otherwise would mean that a child in their care would have to be moved.

7. Carers must also be the **legal owner of the property in question**.

8. In addition, the council retains the right to undertake a cost benefit analysis to ensure any proposed work provides Best Value.

9. The process which will be followed in assessing any request for support will be:

- Request for adaptation;
- Social Worker has initial discussion with carers and provides relevant information;
- Discussion to include alternative options for finance, the need for legal contracts and charges, including claw back arrangements and the ability of the carers to contribute financially towards some of the costs;
- Meets eligibility threshold (carer must be the legal owner of the property);
- Team Manager approval to make application (does not guarantee approval);
- Carer (foster / family / adoptor) obtains 3 quotes – (information sheet to carer);
- Application completed by fostering social worker, with input from child's social worker;
- If request is over £2500, financial statement is required from the applicant;
- Application sent to relevant Service Manager for decision:
 - Adoption Service Manager;
 - Fostering Service Manager;
 - SGO's Service Manager.

Decision Making

10. Nottinghamshire County Council adopts a flexible, shared-cost policy in relation to these grants. Therefore, there is some expectation that carers make a financial contribution to the cost of the adaptation, where possible.

11. **Amounts up to £2500** – decision made by Service Manager (per application, not per child).

12. If Yes

- Financial Assistance Agreement sent to carers;
- Once signed, work can proceed;
- Finance informed.

13. If No

- Letter to carers with reason why;
- Decision logged on Framework database.

14. **Amounts £2501 - £30,000** – Decision by Group Manager (initial recommendation and report forwarded on by Service Manager).

15. If Yes

- Legal Department informed;
- Financial Assistance Agreement sent to carers;
- In addition, a Legal Charge is applied if over £10,000 (the legal charge is imposed upon the foster carer's property and serves to protect the Local Authority's investment);
- Once signed, work can proceed;
- Finance informed.

16. If No

- Letter to carers with reason why;
- Decision logged on Framework.

17. **Amounts over £30,000**, Group Manager make recommendation and report must go to Children and Young People's Committee.

18. If Yes

- Financial Assistance Agreement sent to carers;
- Legal Charge is applied;
- Once signed, work can proceed;
- Finance informed.

19. If No

- Letter to carers with reason why;
- Decision logged on Framework.

Payments

20. Payments for the building work are made to the foster carer in instalments and a final payment is not released until the building works have been completed to standard and to the satisfaction of a local building inspector.

21. The payments are monitored by the foster carer's team manager and by the children and young people's payment team.

Additional Relevant Documentation:

- Application Form – Request for Funding for Building Adaptations, including Financial Statement;
- Process Flow Chart;
- Information for Carers;
- Information for Social Workers;
- Legal Checklist;
- Legal FAQ's;
- Financial Assistance Agreement (up to £2500, £2501 to £10,000, £10,001 and above);
- Legal Charge (over £10,001).