

8 July 2013**Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE****PROVISION OF FUNDING FOR ADAPTATIONS TO LOCAL AUTHORITY
FOSTER HOMES****Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks approval to provide funding totalling £84,000 for adaptations to three Local Authority foster homes.

Information and Advice**Background**

2. LF and BF, SG and FG, and HH and PH are approved foster carers for Nottinghamshire County Council and are Emergency Foster Carers. They provide foster placements for children and young people in crisis situations. As such, the foster carers need to be very flexible in meeting the needs of diverse children and young people across a wide age range. Their role involves providing stability for the child/ren in crisis, helping to assess their needs, and supporting the child/ren to move to a more permanent family placement.

LF and BF

3. LF and BF have been approved as foster carers since 2006 and are experienced and competent foster carers. Currently the couple are able to provide one placement at a time.
4. LF and BF are committed to their fostering career and are prepared to extend their property, via a single storey extension, to increase their capacity to provide a second foster placement, and potentially a very short-term third placement. As well as providing this extra capacity for the fostering service, the extension would facilitate the foster carers to provide the important resource of placements for two siblings, or for parent and baby foster placements. The total cost of the extension is estimated at £20,000.
5. An investment of £20,000 provides both benefit and value to the Local Authority. The investment would realise sustainable benefit and value in the expansion of the Local Authority's internal fostering capacity. Compared with alternative placement options, £20,000 is approximately equivalent to a 20 week placement in the independent fostering sector or a 7 week placement in external residential provision.

SG and FG

6. SG and FG have been approved as foster carers since 2005 and are experienced and competent foster carers. Currently the couple are able to provide two bedrooms for use by foster children.
7. SG and FG are committed to their fostering career and are prepared to extend their property, via a first storey extension, to increase their capacity to provide a further foster placement. As well as providing this extra capacity for the fostering service, the extension would facilitate the foster carers to provide the important resource of placements for up to four siblings, or for parent and baby foster placements. The total cost of the extension is estimated at £28,000.
8. An investment of £28,000 provides both benefit and value to the Local Authority. The investment would realise sustainable benefit and value in the expansion of the Local Authority's internal fostering capacity. Compared with alternative placement options, £28,000 is approximately equivalent to a 28 week placement in the independent fostering sector or a 9 week placement in external residential provision.

HH and PH

9. HH and PH have been approved as foster carers since 2004 and are experienced and competent foster carers. Currently the couple are able to provide one placement at a time.
10. HH and PH are committed to their fostering career and are prepared to extend their property, via a two storey extension, to increase their capacity to provide a second foster placement. As well as providing this extra capacity for the fostering service, the extension would facilitate the foster carers to provide the important resource of placements for two siblings, or for parent and baby foster placements. The total cost of the extension is estimated at £36,000.
11. An investment of £36,000 provides both benefit and value to the Local Authority. The investment would realise sustainable benefit and value in the expansion of the Local Authority's internal fostering capacity. Compared with alternative placement options, £36,000 is approximately equivalent to a 36 week placement in the independent fostering sector or an 11 week placement in external residential provision.

Budget capacity

12. There is sufficient budget capacity, within the Access to Resources budget, to provide grants of £20,000, £28,000 and £36,000 to the foster carers LF and BF, SG and FG, and HH and PH respectively. The Local Authority has previously secured similar adaptation grants via the imposition of a legal charge upon a foster carer's property. The terms and conditions of a legal charge ensure that the investment of public money is protected. The terms and conditions convert a grant payment to a loan payment in the event of the foster carers ceasing to foster i.e. within a ten year period of a grant payment having been made.

Other Options Considered

13. No other options have been considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. The Local Authority's looked after population continues to rise and there is significant pressure upon the external placement budget. Any measure that can reduce potential expenditure on an external foster placement represents an efficiency to the Local Authority.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, public sector equality duty, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

16. The service user is a looked after child. By creating additional internal fostering capacity, local placement choice will be afforded with experienced and skilled foster carers.

Financial Implications

17. There is budget capacity available within the Access to Resources budget to make these grants totalling £84,000. £194,000 permanent budget was allocated to the Access to Resources Service in this financial year to create further fostering capacity. Currently a project is taking place to ensure the most effective use of this investment, and it is not envisaged that the £194,000 will be committed to permanent posts in the fostering service for at least the first half of the financial year. A productive use of the resulting half year temporary underspend, in line with intended purpose, is to use it to create extra capacity within our existing foster carer households through these grants.

Equalities Implications

18. Due regard has been given to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Human Rights Implications

19. A child's right to family life is enhanced when the Local Authority has local, foster placement provision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) approval is given to provide funding of £20,000 for an adaptation to a Local Authority foster home to foster carers LF and BF. Standard legal charges upon the foster carers' property will apply to protect the Local Authority.
- 2) approval is given to provide funding of £28,000 for an adaptation to a Local Authority foster home to foster carers SG and FG. Standard legal charges upon the foster carers' property will apply to protect the Local Authority.
- 3) approval is given to provide funding of £36,000 for an adaptation to a Local Authority foster home to foster carers HH and PH. Standard legal charges upon the foster carers' property will apply to protect the Local Authority.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 21/06/13)

20. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (KLA 17/06/13)

21. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 17 of the report above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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