

9 December 2013

Agenda Item: 9

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

PROVISION OF FUNDING FOR HOME EXTENSION TO ENABLE FIVE LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN TO REMAIN WITH THEIR GRANDMOTHER AS THE SUBJECTS OF A SPECIAL GUARDIANSHIP ORDER THROUGHOUT THEIR CHILDHOOD

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to fund the cost of an extension to A's home to allow her to continue to care for her five grandchildren who have been placed with her since October 2012. A is seeking Special Guardianship Orders for all of the children.
2. The Local Authority has been directed by Nottingham County Court to report back on the funding request – the Court are of the view that A should be supported to enable her to care for the children as subjects of a Special Guardianship Order. The Children's Guardian is fully supportive of the plan that the children remain with their grandmother throughout their childhood.
3. Initial plans have been drawn up and estimates sought. Approval would also be required from the mortgage lender regarding the Local Authority's proposal to place a charge over the property. Once funding is agreed a planning application will be made.

Information and Advice

4. The Local Authority initiated care proceedings in relation to the children in November 2012. The children had been subjected to significant harm over a number of years. Assessments on the children's parents indicated they would not be able to provide care to the children. The Local Authority has a responsibility to identify family members who can provide permanent care in these situations. A was approached and indicated her willingness to be assessed as a permanent carer.
5. A lives in the property with her disabled daughter, B, who it is not anticipated will be moving to her own accommodation. The five children, three girls and two boys are aged between four and fourteen years of age.
6. The assessment of A has now been completed by the Local Authority and the placement of the five children with A is supported. The children have been living with their grandmother since October 2012. She has made an application for a Special Guardianship Order and the Local Authority will be asking for a Supervision Order to offer

support to the children and A for one year following the making of a Special Guardianship Order.

7. A's house comprises an entrance hallway at the side of the house and this leads to the bathroom and kitchen/dining area to the back of the house and the lounge to the front of the house. There is a driveway at the side of the house that leads to the garage and there is a small paved garden area at the back of the house as the existing extension to the kitchen and the conservatory takes up the majority of the garden. There are three bedrooms on the first floor.
8. The arrangements for the accommodation of all the people in the property are that the three girls currently share a double bedroom - the older girls share a bunk bed and the youngest child has her own bed. There is room in the bedroom for one or two of the children at a time to study to do their homework and for them to store their belongings. The two boys currently share a small single room, they have a bunk bed but the room is so small that they do not have room to store their clothes in the room or to do their homework in there. A has the other double room and B has moved from her former bedroom in order to accommodate the children and she now uses the conservatory as her bedroom.

Other Options Considered

9. The downstairs could be further extended to provide two single rooms one of which could be used for B and one of which could be used by one of the children.
10. The family could sell the house and buy another.
11. The children could move to Local Authority foster carers.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. It is not suitable to extend the ground floor. A does not want the children to sleep on a different floor to her as she does not feel that she would be able to supervise and/or care for them adequately during the night. It would not provide her with an additional bathroom and it would take up the entire back garden thus taking away the small safe area that the children currently have to play in.
13. The family and children have their support networks locally and do not wish to move. Any move would be very difficult for B given her disability.
14. The Local Authority and Court do not support the option of the children being placed with foster carers. There is a statutory responsibility under the Children Act 1989 to support children to live within their families where possible. To move the children to foster carers would likely mean they would be separated which is not in their best interests. The costs of fostering are significantly higher.
15. A recommendation is made to provide funding to enable a first floor extension to be built to provide larger bedrooms for the children and an extra bathroom. The current accommodation cannot meet the needs of this family given the ages of the children and

their requirements for space now and as they all mature. It is also not suitable that B continue to sleep in the conservatory as she needs privacy and a bedroom for herself.

16. Quotations have been received to extend the first floor of the property which would enlarge the bedrooms the children currently sleep in and provide an additional first floor bathroom and toilet.

Statutory and Policy Implications

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

Financial Implications

18. Three quotations have been obtained. The estimated cost for the proposed extension will be £42,000 which includes architects drawings, planning permission, building regulations and VAT. The cost of the five children remaining in foster care until they are 18 years old is £826,156.
19. The cost of the extension, if approved, will be funded from the existing budget for support to Special Guardians. This cost is reflected in the current forecast for the service and can be contained within the Children's Social Care budget overall during the 2013/14 and 2014/15 financial years.

Human Rights Implications

20. The option recommended provides the children with the right to family life under Article 8 Human Rights Act.

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults Implications

21. These five children are subject to care proceedings in the County Court. This was due to them experiencing significant harm whilst living with their parents. The option to remain with their grandmother under a Special Guardianship Order gives them future security and protection from harm.

Implications for Service Users

22. The five children can remain living together and with the maternal extended family. This is a permanent placement for the children where their needs can be safely met.

RECOMMENDATION/S

That:

- 1) approval is given for the extension to A's home be carried out at an estimated cost of £42,000 up to a maximum cost of £45,000.
- 2) a legal charge order is made, to ensure that the costs of the extension can be reclaimed/reimbursed if the children do not remain in this placement until adulthood.

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 14/11/13)

22. Children and Young People's Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report as it is responsible for services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health.

Financial Comments (KLA 15/11/13)

24. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraphs 18 and 19 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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