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Title: Adaptations to Property and House Moves Policy

1. **Aim / Summary:** This Adaptations to Property or House Moves Policy is applicable to foster carers, adoptive parents, or special guardians of a child/ren on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council who may be considering an adaptation to their property or a house move in connection with their role.

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Adaptations to Property or House Moves Policy

1. Context

This Adaptations to Property or House Moves Policy is applicable to foster carers, adoptive parents, or special guardians of a child/ren on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) who may be considering an adaptation to their property or require more space in their home in connection with their role. This is a discretionary service.

2. Scope of this policy

Wherever possible children should be able to live in a stable family-based setting for the duration of their childhood with any siblings. Placement moves should be minimal, equitable and regardless of placement type, public funds should be used responsibly and fairly. If an adaptation to a home is not possible, an alternative option could be to move to an alternative property. In cases where a house move requires funding from the County Council, this may be considered as long-term financial assistance, of which the terms would need to be negotiated.

3. Objectives

- To increase the number of placements
- To enable the carer to continue to look after several children
- To provide permanence for specific looked after child/ren or young persons to whom the County Council has responsibility.

4. Eligibility

A request for funding under the Adaptations to Property or House Moves Policy will only be considered when any one of the following applies:

- to provide extra capacity in their home to care for another child on behalf of NCC
- 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
- to enable a house move to care for another child on behalf of NCC.

The NCC carer/carers must be the legal owner/s of the property in question before an application for an adaptation to a property can be considered. If carers are renting a property, then it is not possible to consider any adaptation.

5. Financial Statement

NCC adopts a **flexible, shared-cost policy** in relation to financial assistance and so there is some expectation that carers make a financial contribution to the cost of the adaptation, or the house move, wherever possible.

6. Key actions

1. Initial Actions

If an NCC carer/carers meets one or more of the eligibility requirements outlined above, a discussion will take place between the social worker and the carer to consider the following options in detail at an early stage:

- Alternative options for finance.
- The need for legal contracts and a legal charge on the property, including recovery arrangements.
- The ability of the carer to contribute financially towards some of the costs.
- If the social worker believes there is merit in the proposal, the service manager will then determine whether an application can be made; however, this is not a guarantee.

If the eligibility criteria to make an application has been approved, the NCC carer/carers should seek three quotes for the cost of the proposed building work. The County Council usually agrees the lowest quote.

If the eligibility to make an application for a house move has been approved, the business case to be considered by CAMG will reflect the local housing market and the needs of the family and household and will be considered based on a clear balance of the best interest of the child(ren) and the financial interest of NCC.

2. Application Process and Approval for Property Adaptations Funding up to £2,500 *(Detailed in the Adaptations Flowchart attached at **Appendix 2**)*

- A discussion takes place between the supervising social worker and carer to determine if the eligibility threshold is met.
- The Fostering service manager provides approval to make an application (however, this does not guarantee that a decision or a grant will be made).
- The NCC carer/carers obtains three quotes and fills in the application form to make an application.
- The service manager approves or rejects the application.
- The supervising social worker informs the carer in writing of approval to provide funding to proceed with the adaptation.
- **Note:** if the application is not approved, the social worker ensures a letter is sent to carers with reason why and the decision is logged on the Mosaic database.

3. Application Process and Approval for Property Adaptations Funding over £2,501 *(Detailed in the Adaptations Flowchart attached at **Appendix 2**)*

- The NCC carer/carers completes the application form and financial statement to include evidence of the carer's sources of income and expenditure, council tax, mortgage repayments, value of property, private pensions, court commitments and savings. This information takes account of possible increases to the value of the carer's property and potential ability to generate income because of the funding.
- The Fostering service manager considers the adaptation to property or house move application and completes the business case funding application.

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- The Group Manager presents the business case to a Children and Families (CFS) Service Director for approval to proceed to the Capital Assets Management Group (CAMG).

The CFS Service Director presents the business case to CAMG. The business case will be considered against the needs of the looked after child/ren and the potential for long term revenue savings

- In accordance with the Financial Regulations, CAMG will review the business case and assess the financial aspects and will advise the Cabinet Member for Finance and, in turn, will seek approval from the relevant approving body.
- If approval for the monies for the financial assistance is given in accordance with the Financial Regulations the CFS Service Director will carry out a final review of the business case to ensure that there are no material changes requiring reconsideration (if so refer back through the process as needed) and they will approve the application .
- **Note:** if the application is not approved, the supervising social worker ensures a letter is sent to the NCC carer/carers with reasons and logs the decision on the Mosaic database.

In cases where a decision is made not to give financial assistance either below or above £2,500 the NCC carer/carers can ask for the decision to be referred to the Corporate Director. As this is a discretionary service the Corporate Director will review the application to check that it has followed the policy. In the event that it has not, the Corporate Director can ask for the application to be re-considered in line with the policy..

4. Payments

Payments for the building work are made to the NCC 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 (via planning/building regulations as part of the planning process). Payments for a house move will be paid in a lump sum to the solicitors acting for the NCC carer/carers in order for the house purchase to proceed. The solicitors will hold the money to order on behalf of NCC until the house purchase completes.

The payments are monitored by the relevant service manager and the CFS departmental payment team.

Appendix

- Adaptations Application Process Flow Chart