

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	25th April 2012
3.	Title:	Extensions and Adaptations to Foster Carer Property
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

The requests for extensions and adaptations generally come from two routes

- Foster carers who are able to increase capacity or who require an extension to provide greater living / bedroom space for their own children and those foster children placed
- Family members who can provide care for a child via a Residence Order or a Special Guardianship Order and therefore prevent the child remaining “looked after”

This report sets out the business case for investing in the 21 current applications in order to create additional foster care capacity and also improve the quality of life for current placements.

6. Recommendations

- That this report be agreed by Cabinet.
- To proceed with the 21 applications as listed above in the order given.
- That the 13 applications which would create additional capacity be prioritised.
- Further requests will be considered assuming the investment results in cost avoidance is over a period of less than 2 years.

7. Proposals and Details

In 2011, as part of the Placement Strategy, letters were sent to all foster carers asking them to consider whether they would like to consider an extension as a way of increasing overall capacity within the fostering service. In doing this consideration was given to the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 and the Children Act 1989 in that the limit for foster carers is no more than three in placement at any one time. Foster Carers reviews presented to Fostering Panel will make reference to foster carers skills and ability to increase capacity and the status of the application for an extension.

The Pathways to Care paper was presented at Corporate Parenting Panel, which sets out a transparent and robust process for decisions to be made about the feasibility of such requests and allows the Local Authority to retain some control over the building work by having designated contractors. The flow chart is included in appendix 2 and details the process for seeking planning permissions. The applications detailed in appendix 1 have all submitted the initial application and the building surveyors have been briefed. In some cases a site visit to discuss the feasibility has been undertaken. Therefore in respect of lead in time for the work to be commenced, some are further along the process than others and it will be a gradual process.

As a result of these initiatives there are currently (see appendix 1) 21 requests submitted for consideration.

These extensions or adaptations would give all a greater quality of life and support the placements continuing.

Of the 19 applications from foster carers, 13 would give the local authority greater capacity in terms of fostering placement , 6 would improve the quality of life and secure the placements long term.

Appendix 1 provides the level of prioritisation in respect of the work being completed. See the key at the bottom of the chart.

8. Finance

The combined cost of undertaking all of the adaptations proposed would be approximately £1.12m. This includes an estimated £911k direct adaptation costs, £118k Asset Management Costs, plus a cost of capital borrowing of approximately £91k

As a result of proceeding with these adaptations there would be an estimated £334k costs avoided this financial year based on the part year effect of 23 placements being paid at the lower average in house fostering rate of £285 per week instead of the average Independent Fostering rate of £878 per week. Future years full year effect of these avoided costs would be approximately £709k per year.

Assuming all of the adaptations went ahead in this financial year and in line with expected timescales the overall estimated Net Cost in the current year would be £785k. The total estimated costs avoided over 3 years to the end of March 2016 would be £633k.

Impact on Revenue Budget	£'000
Year 1 Cost	785
Year 2 Cost Avoided	-709
Year 3 Cost Avoided	-709
Estimate of Net Costs Avoided over 3 years	-633

9. Risk and Uncertainties

Any projects agreed are subject to legally binding contracts between the carer and Rotherham MBC with a sliding scale of payback should the increased capacity not be delivered or in the event of placement breakdown or carers terminating their registration

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

There is a statutory requirement within the Children Act 1989 that from April 2011, local authorities working with their Children's Trust partners must be in a position to secure, where reasonably practicable, sufficient accommodation for looked after children in their local authority area.

Although the sufficiency duty is placed on the local authority, Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires that the authority makes arrangements to promote co-operation with relevant partners (health, schools, police, probation, third sector etc) with a view to improving the well being of children in the local authority area. Section 10 also requires the partners to co-operate with the local authority

Benefits of complying with this duty are that children are placed within their local communities enabling them to retain identity and cultural links. Savings can be achieved in terms of the time and money to support families maintaining contact. Additional savings are achieved in respect of social worker / independent reviewing officer time and cost of supporting the child in placement.

11. Background and Consultation

Report to corporate parenting panel

Report to SLT

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Appendix 1 Extensions

Carer	Increased Capacity	Improve Quality of Life	Cost (k)	Comments
C	Yes by 2		52	
T	Yes by 2		45*	
H	Yes by 2		45*	
W		Yes	48*	2 children placed with additional needs who currently have to share
N		Yes	45*	Foster Child having to share with carers own daughter
S	Yes by 1		45*	
W	Yes by 1		48*	
M	Yes by 1		45*	
W	Yes by 1		40*	
D	Yes		32	Can only take a baby currently
E	Yes by 1		40*	
S / H	Yes by 1		42*	Families Together Carer – able to provide for children with disabilities
L	Yes by 1		40*	
R	Yes by 1		45*	
M		Yes	45	Daughter having to share parents room
S		Yes	52	Carer having to share with her daughter
F		Yes	48 / 38	3 long term placements provided currently – 2 having to share
C		Yes	60	2 long term placements provided – boys currently sharing
T			26	Family and Friends – RO /SGO
M			45	Family and Friends – RO / SGO
K			29	Not clear if their own children intend to continue to share which would increase capacity – further work required with carers as to intention
			Est £911k	

Key

Figures in black – confirmed cost estimates

Figures in red – estimated cost following building surveyor

Figures in Red with * - ballpark figures of what we think it may cost

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICE

PATHWAYS TO CARE – PROCESS FLOWCHART - DRAFT





