

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO CABINET
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1.	Meeting:	Cabinet
2.	Date:	25 th 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

Report author:

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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

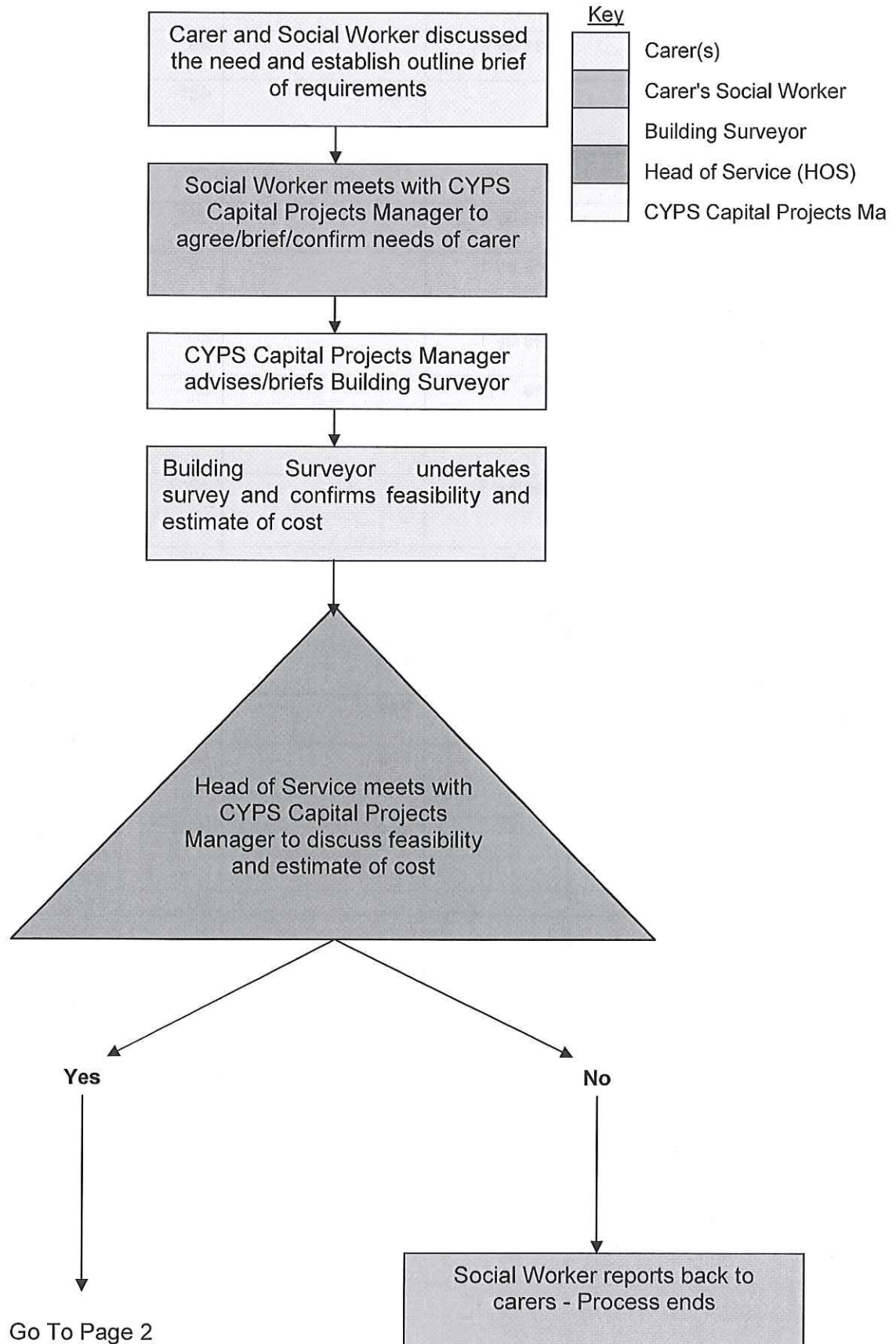
Figures in red – estimated cost following building surveyor

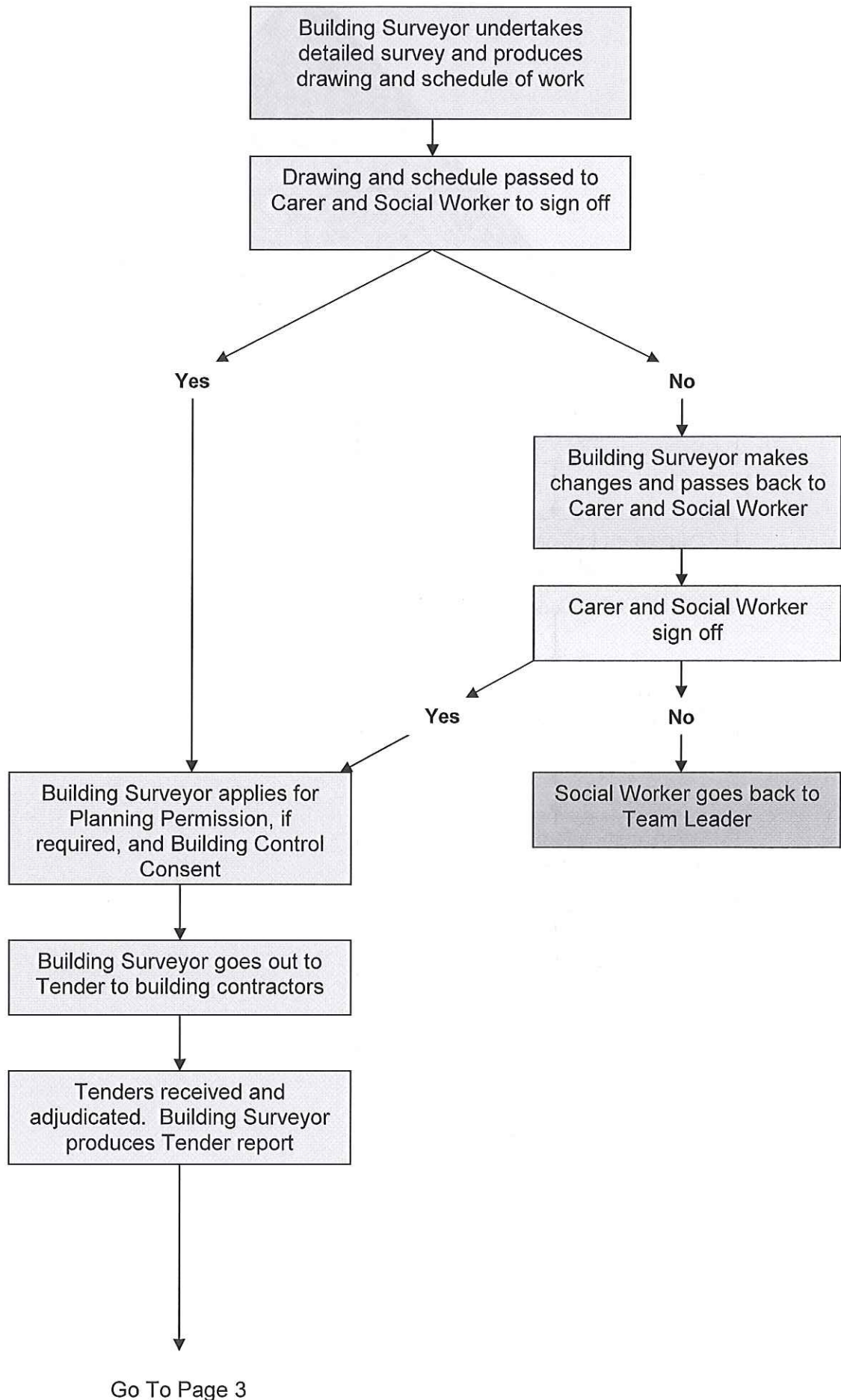
Figures in Red with * - ballpark figures of what we think it may cost

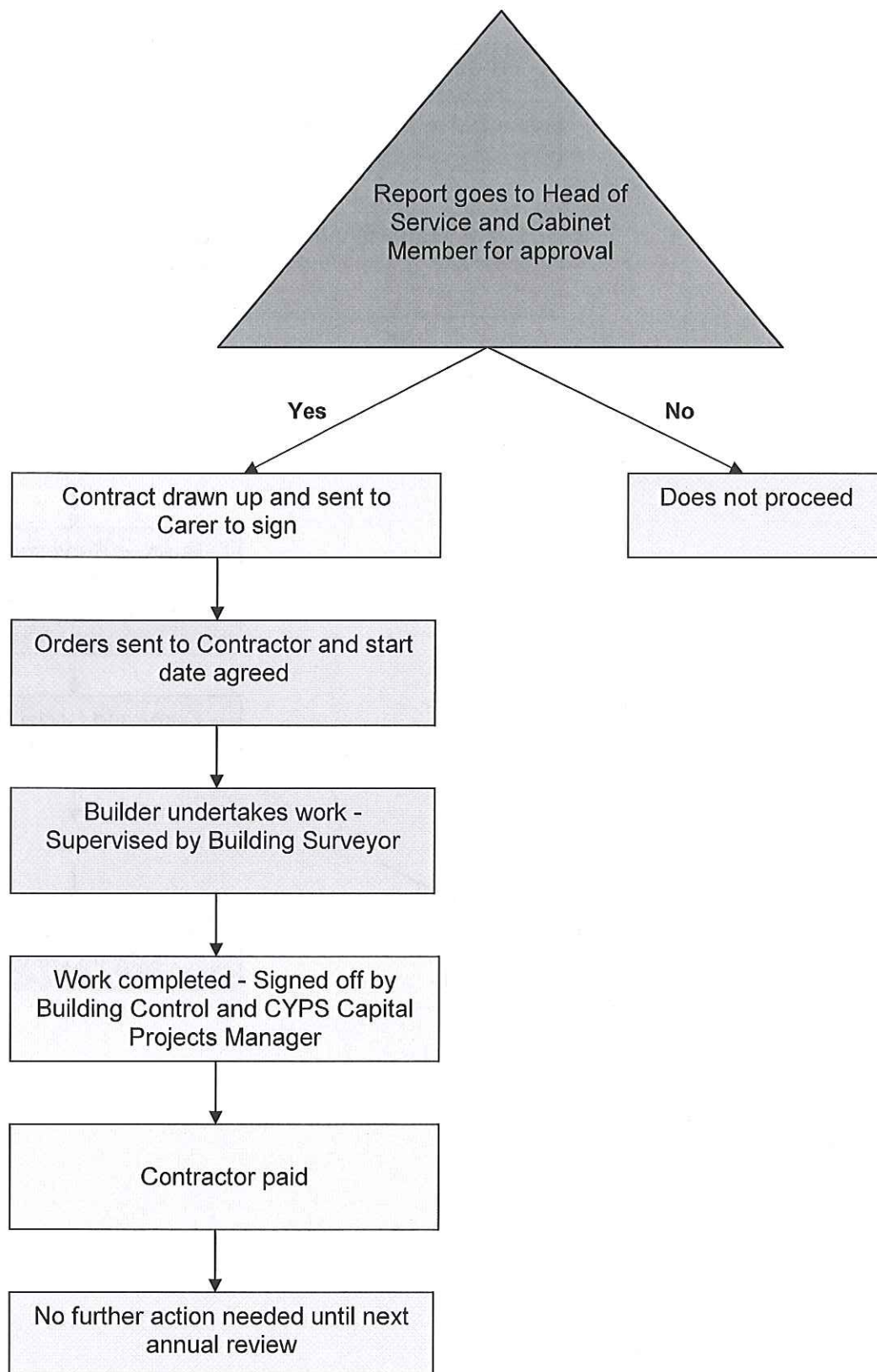
Appendix 2

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICE

PATHWAYS TO CARE – PROCESS FLOWCHART - DRAFT







LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN'S SERVICE

PATHWAYS TO CARE – APPLICATION FORM



Service:	Adoption	Fostering
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Sections A – D (To be completed by Social Worker)

SECTION A – CARER DETAILS

1	Carer's name		
2	Carer's full address	Line 1: Line 2: Line 3: Line 4: Postcode:	
3	Carer's telephone number		
4	Is property owned or rented?	Owned	Rented RMBC Council Y / N
<i>Please Note: Grants are only considered for owned properties or RMBC council owned</i>			
5	Number of years carer with service	Carer's current fee level	

SECTION B – CHILD DETAILS

6	Number of birth children at home	Ages and Gender	
7	Any other relevant information (e.g. any other related household members, specific needs of birth children)		
8	Number of children currently in placement	Ages and Gender	
9	Any other relevant information		
10	If proposal is to enable carer to take on more children, how many more	Ages and Gender	
11	Has this been approved by Panel	Yes	No

SECTION C – NATURE OF REQUEST

12	Please tick which best describes what the funding request is for below:		
	Building alterations		
	Contribution towards house purchase		
	Vehicle purchase		
14	Number of existing bedrooms	Occupancy of each bedroom	Bedroom 1: Bedroom 2: Bedroom 3: Bedroom 4:
15	A requirement of the grant is that the vehicle is used for transporting children in care to school, activities, contact etc., i.e. no other claims for transport will be made. Please tick the box to confirm carer's agreement to this.		

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SECTION D – DETAILS OF REQUEST	
Please Note: <i>Grants for building alterations or house purchase will be considered up to a maximum value of £?????? per child.</i> <i>Grants for vehicle purchase will be considered up to a maximum of £??????</i>	
16	Amount requested
17	Why funding is needed Please include all relevant information and any relevant timescales
Name and signature of Social Worker	
Date	

Section E - For office use only						
SECTION E – APPROVAL DETAILS						
		Yes	No			
	Supported by Team Manager			Signature	Date	
	Supported by Service Manager			Signature	Date	
	Approved by Director			Signature	Date	
	Approved by Cabinet Member			Signature	Date	
	Amount approved					
	Any other relevant information					
Name and signature of Head of Service				Date		