

**REPORT TO:** Cabinet Member Children's Services

**DATE:** 14<sup>th</sup> September 2010

**SUBJECT:** Foster Carer Home Extension

**WARDS  
AFFECTED:** Blundellsands

**REPORT OF:** Peter Morgan – Strategic Director - Children, Schools & Families

**CONTACT  
OFFICER:** Marilyn Josefsen, Interim Service Manager, Provision  
Tony Murphy, Fostering Manager

**EXEMPT/  
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

This Report is for consideration of a building extension that will provide bedroom and living space for two looked after children who have full care orders (Section 31 Children Act 1989) and who will remain in the care of their aunt until adulthood.

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

The current carer is the children's aunt and her accommodation is a rented tenancy with One Vision. The aunt's property is a three bed-roomed house with bathroom, kitchen and open lounge of limited size. The aunt has of two of her own two children (both girls and aged 19 and 16 respectively) still living with her and each daughter has her own bedroom. For the last four years, since being placed with their aunt, the two looked after children (a boy, Child A aged 7 and a girl, Child B, aged 9 years) have shared their aunt's bedroom with their aunt. This arrangement falls outside of the Fostering National Minimum Standards (accommodation suitability for children) and the sleeping arrangements are not meeting the children's individual needs nor are they affording the aunt with any kind of privacy.

The aunt does not want to move from her home, her community or support networks and she does not want to move her niece and nephew from their school and friends. There is no suitable alternative accommodation within the area. The only option to keep the children within this permanent placement with their aunt would be to extend their home.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

The Cabinet Member is asked to consider the intention to invest in an extension to the property in order to keep two siblings within their extended family. Given the ages of the children and their familial attachments with their aunt and cousins and their birth father the option of adoption has not been deemed appropriate.

**KEY DECISION:** No

**FORWARD PLAN:** Not appropriate

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the meeting

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

Private rented accommodation was considered as an option but the aunt does not wish to relinquish her status as a social housing tenant nor does she want to move from her neighbourhood.

The children would not be able to remain with their aunt under the present sharing of room’s arrangements and would therefore need to be placed with other carers.

**IMPLICATIONS:**

**Budget/Policy Framework:** MB167 A4211 Fostering Services

**Financial:**

<b><u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>2009 2010 £</b>	<b>2010/ 2011 £</b>	<b>2011/ 2012 £</b>	<b>2012/ 2013 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure		61250		
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<b><u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u></b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources		Yes		
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

**Legal:**

**Risk Assessment:**

**Asset Management:**

**CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

**CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:**

<b><u>Corporate Objective</u></b>		<b><u>Positive Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Neutral Impact</u></b>	<b><u>Negative Impact</u></b>
1	Creating a Learning Community	/		
2	Creating Safe Communities		/	
3	Jobs and Prosperity	/		
4	Improving Health and Well-Being	/		
5	Environmental Sustainability		/	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities	/		
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy		/	
8	Children and Young People	/		

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

Fostering Regulations 2002

Fostering National Minimum Standards 2002

Standard 6.4

Each child placed has his/her own bedroom and accommodation arrangements reflect the child's assessed need for privacy and space .....

## **Background**

The children Child A (aged 7 years) and his sister Child B (aged 9 years) became looked after children by Sefton Council on 31/10/02 under an Emergency Protection Order and an Interim Care Order was granted on the 08/11/02. A full Care Order was made on the children on the 04/07/03

On the 11/11/02 the children were placed with foster carers and then they were returned to their birth parents under a Placement with Parents Agreement (Children Act 1989) on the 04/07/03. The Local Authority retain Parental Responsibility under The Children Act 1989

The children were removed from their parents' care and went to stay with their maternal aunt, on the 26/05/06.

Sefton Fostering Panel approved the aunt as a kinship foster carer for the children in February 2007. Records show that the care plan for the children was for them to return to the care of their father. However, he was later deemed as unable to parent the children and they have subsequently remained with their aunt.

The children were first placed with their aunt on a short-term basis and it was acknowledged that there was a shortage of bedroom and living space and that the children would have to share a bedroom with their aunt. However, this was some four years ago and the present arrangements are outside of the Fostering National Minimum Standards and moreover neither child's needs are met by the sleeping arrangements (most especially Child B, who has enuresis).

The aunt's property is rented from One Vision Housing Association; there has been a request for a larger (5 bedroom) accommodation that would be more appropriate for the family group. No alternative properties are suitable or available for the aunt and her family group.

One Vision has been approached to consider alterations to the current property. They have done a site visit and offered to project manage the design and build of a two storey extension.

The inclusive costs are from architectural to planning and from building to site clearance are in the region of £65250. This is an estimated cost, as One Vision will be going to tender in the next month for the work to be undertaken.

One Vision will not charge any management or service fees to Children Schools and Families, and because of the capital investment by Children Schools and Families, there will be favourable nominations agreements in place should the aunt move from the property. Sefton Council has 'nomination rights' to 75% of One Vision Housing properties and this principal is further developed under the new sub-regional choice based lettings system/policy.

### **Alternative Arrangements**

If the children were unable to remain in the care of their aunt, an alternative fostering arrangement would need to be identified. Sefton does not have any permanent foster carers and this would mean that a permanent placement with an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) would need to be identified.

The approximate cost for an IFA Placement = £800 per week per child

The potential cost until the age of 18 years is

For Child A, age 7 yrs, 11 years in care = £800x52x11 =	£457,600
For Child B, age 9 yrs, 9 years in care = £800x52x 9 =	£374,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>£832,000</b>

The current Fostering Allowances for the children until age 18years

Child A aged 7years =	£ 78,832
Child B aged 9 years =	£ 66,144
<b>Total</b>	<b>£144,976</b>

Differential in cost for current placement =	£687,024
Less cost of extension =	£ 65,000
<b>Potential Total Saving =</b>	<b>£622,024</b>

### **Recommendations**

The Cabinet Member is asked to approve:

The investment of £65,000 to potentially save £622,024.

The Investment is for the purpose built 2-storey extension as a means of providing permanency for looked after children Child A and Child B, aged 7 and 9 years respectively.